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HORATIO ALGER, JR. *By Frederick Lewis Allen*

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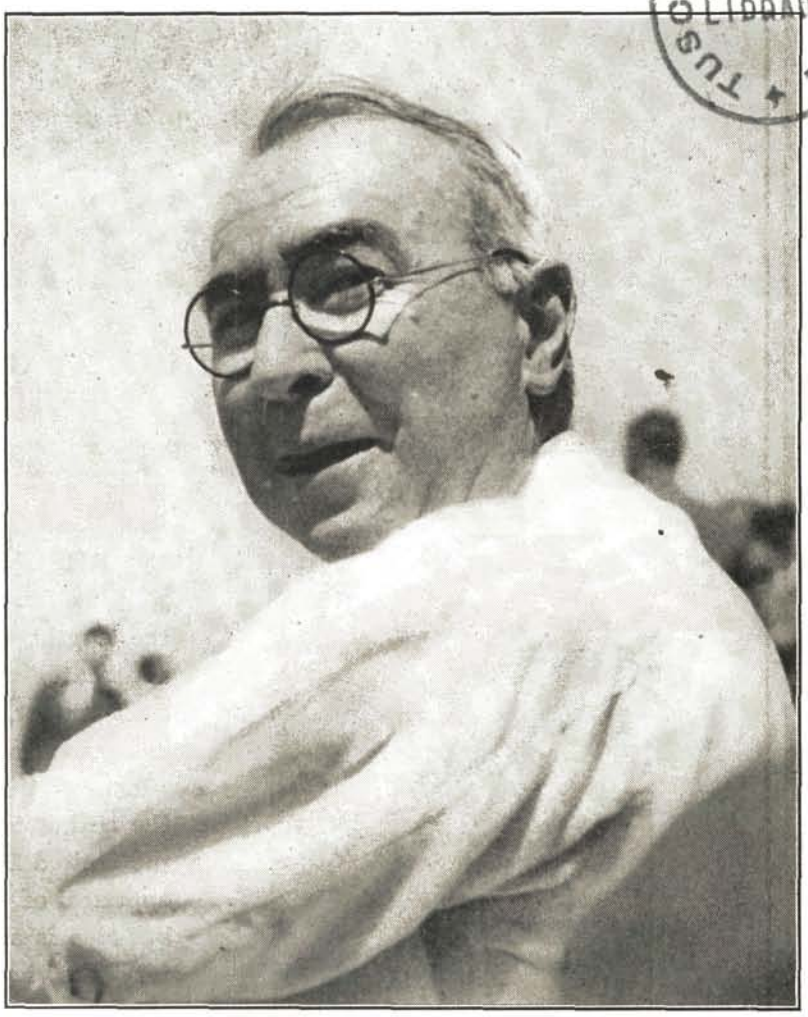

ROGER BURLINGAME

"He makes it clear that [invention] was one of the great shaping forces of the nation, and that the direction it took governed to a great extent the form of American economics, society, and even politics." . . . *(See page 5)*

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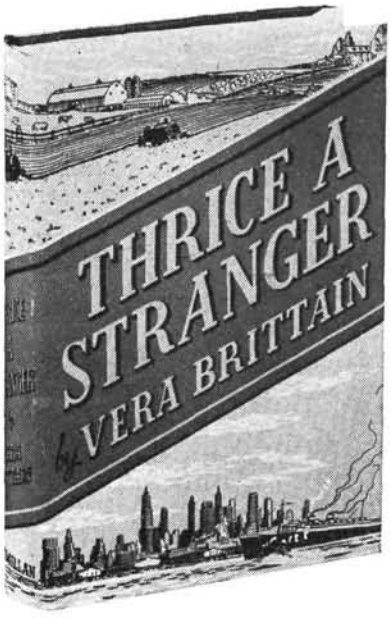
AUTOBIOGRAPHY WITH AN AMERICAN BACKGROUND

THRICE A STRANGER

By VERA BRITTAIN

Author of

"Testament of Youth"



A REPORT on Miss Brittain's three visits to America—at the height of a boom, in the depths of depression, and with recovery apparently impending; characterized by the same candor, vitality and zest which so marked her previous book, a long-lived best seller.

During the course of seventy lecture tours, the author travelled more than 50,000 miles in the United States. Her narrative is not only an appraisal of the changes between 1927 and 1937, but also is an evaluation of the national spirit from the viewpoint of a gifted "alien" in which she enumerates those phases which will, and should, endure. Price $2.50

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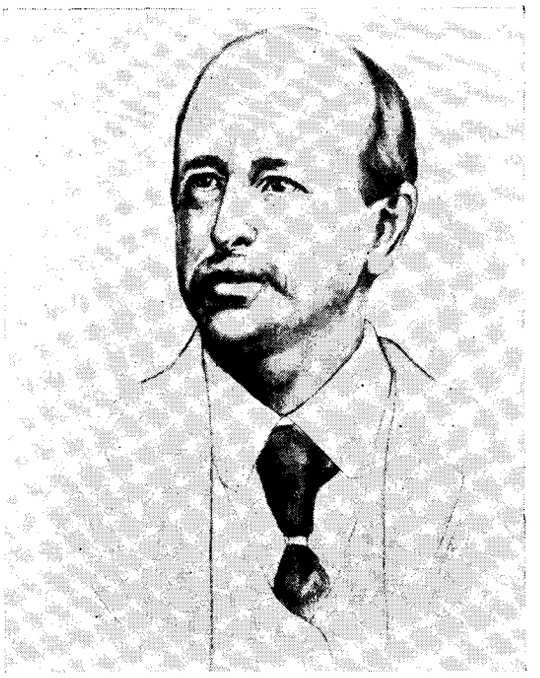
Horatio Alger, Jr.

BY

FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN



Horatio Alger, Jr. (From "Alger: a Biography without a Hero" by Herbert R. Mayes: Vanguard.)

IF you relish paradoxes, consider the career of Horatio Alger, Jr. He made his fame writing books in which boys rose "from rags to riches"—yet he himself did not begin life in rags and did not die rich. The boys in his books got ahead by outwitting thieves and sharpers—yet he himself, a mild and generous little man who gave freely of his earnings to newsboys and bootblacks on the New York streets (the sort of boys who were his favorite heroes), was an easy mark for impostors. His books were, and are, generally regarded by the critical as trash—yet their sales mounted into the millions, he was one of the most popular of all American authors, if not of all authors of all time; and there can be little doubt that he had a far-reaching influence upon the economic and social thought of America—an influence all the greater, perhaps, because it was innocently and naïvely and undogmatically exerted.

Alger wrote always about boys who were on their own, making their way for themselves, usually in the big city. His own boyhood was quite different. It was highly protected and regimented. He was born in 1832 in Revere, Massachusetts, a town which has become one of the northern suburbs of Boston; Horatio Alger, senior, his father, a Unitarian minister, was a bleak, God-fearing man who fought the sins of the flesh and wanted to rear up young Horatio to join him in the spiritual leadership of America. Young Horatio was kept away from all playmates who might prove naughty influences; was put through such a strict course of study that by the time he was eight years old he could explain the Revolutionary War, add fractions in his head, and write the synopsis of a sermon; and became such a little prig that the neighbors' children called him Holy Horatio. When he was fourteen he was sent away to school and learned for the first time the joys of natural play and of mischief; but even after he reached Harvard his primness remained. He fell in love with Patience Stires of Cambridge when he was nineteen, and wanted to marry her, but gave her up—to his lasting regret—when his father told him that marriage would prevent him from continuing his preparation for the church. And later he left a boarding-house at college because, seeing his landlady scantily dressed in the doorway of her room, he resolved to "move to where there is greater respect for decency." Yet, earnest puritan though young Alger was, he did not want to follow his father into the ministry. He wanted to write.

After he left Harvard College he went through a long period of false starts and indecision and frustration. He tried to write but failed miserably. He completed a long theological course but hated it. He went to Paris, tasted the Bohemian life, tasted briefly also the delights of the flesh (because, as he wrote in his diary, genius had prerogatives and he would have prerogatives too), but went through agonies of shame over his affair with Elise Monselet—and produced in Paris nothing of any literary moment. He returned to America and became a minister at Brewster, Massachusetts. But still he was so obsessed by his literary ambition that he would sketch out plots on the margins of his sermons; and in 1866—when the Civil War had ended and he was thirty-four years old—he gave up the church once and for all and went to New York to write boys' books.

There he remained most of the rest of his life. He never married; there was a period when he was pathetically in love with a married woman, but even then he did not apparently hope to win her from her husband, though he so adored her that when she tired of him he went into a mental breakdown. One of his closest attachments was to a Chinese boy whom he befriended and fathered for three years, until the boy was tragically killed in a street accident. Another close attachment was to Charles O'Connor, who ran the Newsboys' Lodging House in New York. It was at this Lodging House that he spent most of his time, for he was devoted to the ragged boys who frequented it, and found in them a constant goldmine of the sort of literary material that he could use. And year by year he turned out Horatio Alger books in profusion—always wanting to write important books for adults, always dreaming of the novel (to be called "Tomorrow") that he would some day produce, but always unable to make a go of anything but the boys' stories which flowed from his pen in a torrent.

The truth seems to be that Horatio Alger never fully grew up to adult life, that he shunned its passions and battles and hard realities. Always, deep down in his heart, he wanted a boy's life—not a boy dominated by a stern father and dressed up in neat and proper clothes, but rather a boy free from parental supervision, free to soil and rumple his clothes, free to make a living for himself and test his budding self-reliance. Alger wanted also to be a man of letters, but could not achieve this ambition because his mind, while clear and logical, was childishly naïve, unimaginative, and bewildered by the complexities of mature life. After his books had become widely known, and people began to turn to him as an authority on slum conditions in New York, he was asked to serve on charitable and civic committees, but though he was happy to be treated as a person of importance he usually sat silent at board meetings; either he was too self-distrustful to speak or the problems discussed there took him beyond his depth.

Once, to be sure, he briefly plunged

Next Week

THE FATHERS
By ALLEN TATE
Reviewed by Ben Ray Redman

THE JOURNALS OF BRONSON ALCOTT
Edited by ODELL SHEPARD
Reviewed by Henry Seidel Canby

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"The standard Horatio Alger hero was a fatherless boy of fifteen or thereabouts who had to earn his way. . . ."

into city affairs with ardor and courage. Having learned how the Italian *padrones* in New York kept little Italian immigrant boys in virtual slavery, lived on their earnings, and thrashed them cruelly, Alger not only wrote a book exposing the *padrone* system ("Phil the Fiddler"), but conducted a campaign of public protest, made speech after speech, and was instrumental in ending the abuse, though more than once he was beaten up by irate *padrones* or their hired thugs. But most of the time, what Alger most enjoyed was to shun adult society and play with the Lodging House boys: to go dashing off with them to fires, to beat the drum in their children's band, to ride on the open horse-cars, to go to Barnum's Museum, to work at organizing a children's theater. One excited entry in his diary, about an especially splendid fire, ended with the triumphant words, "Rode back on engine." As he made money with his books he would spend it on the boys—giving them presents, setting up a bootblack in business, helping a newsboy's mother with the rent payments. He died in 1899, at the age of sixty-seven—still a nice boy, hard-working, generous, friendly, innocent of heart.

It was this perpetual youth's singular fortune to have just that simplicity, that elementary directness of approach to fiction-writing, which would make his books a joy to immature minds. From the moment when William T. Adams, the author of the "Oliver Optic" books, encouraged him, in 1865, to write "Ragged Dick," the way was clear for him. "Ragged Dick" was followed by over a hundred other volumes—exactly how many, it would take an indefatigable bibliographer to discover. (Herbert R. Mayes, writing Alger's biography, ran the total up to 119, and later found that he had left out several.) Some of the titles, such as "Bound to Rise," "Luck and Pluck," "Sink or Swim," "Do and Dare," "Strive and Succeed," will evoke nostalgic memories in many an older reader today. And almost all of the books were essentially the same—variations upon an invariable theme.

The standard Horatio Alger hero was a fatherless boy of fifteen or thereabouts who had to earn his way, usually in New York City. Sometimes he had to help support a widowed mother with his bootblacking or peddling; sometimes his parentage was unknown and he lived with an aged and eccentric miser, or with a strange hermit who claimed to be his uncle. It might even be that his father was living, but was having trouble with the mortgage on the old farm. Always, however, the boy had to stand on his own feet and face the practical problem of getting on.

This problem was set before the reader in exact financial detail. On the very first page of "Do and Dare," for example, it was disclosed that the young hero's mother, as postmistress at Wayneboro, had made during the preceding year just $398.50. Whenever "our hero" had to deal with a mortgage, the reader was told the precise amount, the rate of interest, and all other details. When our hero took a job, the reader could figure for himself exactly how much progress he was making by getting $5 a week in wages at the jewelry store and another $5 a week tutoring Mrs. Mason's son in Latin. Our hero was always a good boy, honest, abstemious (in fact, sometimes unduly disposed to preach to drinkers and smokers), prudent, well-mannered (except perhaps for the preaching), and frugal. The excitement of each book lay in his progress toward wealth.

Always there were villains who stood in his way—crooks who would rob him of his earnings, sharpers who would prey upon his supposed innocence. His battles with these villains furnished plenty of melodrama. They tried to sell him worthless gold watches on railroad trains, held him up as he was buggy-driving home with his employer's funds, kidnaped him and held him prisoner in a New York hide-out, chloroformed him in a Philadelphia hotel room, slugged him in a Chicago alley-tenement. But always he overcame them—with the aid of their invariable cowardice. (There must be many men now living who remember the shock of outraged surprise with which they discovered that the village bully did not, as in the Alger books, invariably run whimpering away at the first show of manly opposition, but sometimes packed a nasty right.) The end of the book—or series of books, for often several volumes were devoted to the varied adventures of a single boy—found our hero well on his way toward wealth: a fortune which might reach to more than a hundred thousand dollars, which, to the average boy reader of the seventies and eighties, was an astronomical sum.

The Alger style was incredibly simple, matter-of-fact, and unoriginal. Whenever Alger turned aside from plain literal fact for a bit of analysis or description, he became a fountain-head of eighth-grade clichés. Nothing whatever was left to the reader's imagination. The dialogue, though it had little relation to the confusing way in which people speak in real life, had at least the merit of transparency. When young Rufus wanted to take Miss Manning and his little sister Rosie out for an evening's diversion, for instance, there would be no beating about the bush:—

"Miss Manning," he said, "have you any engagement this evening?"

"It is hardly necessary to ask, Rufus," she replied; "my company is not in very great demand."

"You have heard of the Japanese jugglers at the Academy of Music?"

"Yes; Mrs. Florence was speaking of them this morning. She and her husband went last evening."

"And we are going this evening. Wouldn't you like to go, Rosie?"

"Ever so much, Rufie. Will you take me?"

"Yes, I have got tickets; see here"; and Rufus drew out the three tickets which he had purchased in the morning.

"Thank you, Rufus," said Miss Manning. "I shall like very much to go. It is long since I went to any place of amusement. How much did the tickets cost?"

"A dollar and a half apiece."

"Isn't that rather extravagant?"

"It would be if we went every week; but now and then we can afford it."

The reader, you will see, always knew just where he was. No frills, no literary antics; always the story moved with elementary clarity.

Nor did any subtleties of character-drawing prevent one from determining immediately who were the good characters and who were the bad ones. They were labeled plainly. When Andy Grant, the poor farmer's son, met Conrad Carter,

(*Continued on page* 16)

"It might even be that his father was living, but was having trouble with the mortgage on the old farm . . ."

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Inventive America

MARCH OF THE IRON MEN. A Social History of the Union Through Invention. By Roger Burlingame. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. $3.75.

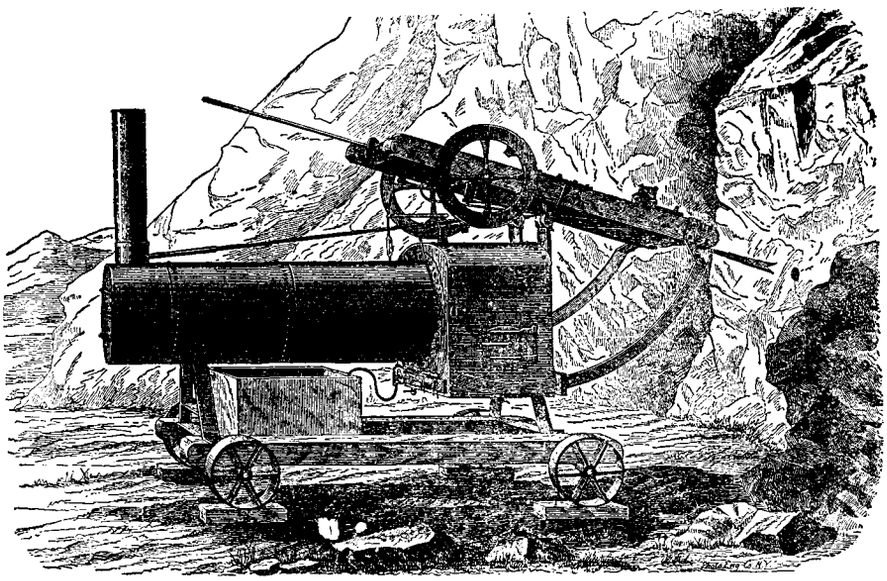
Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

MR. BURLINGAME'S book has the two great merits of design and reach. It is planned about a central idea, and it tries successfully to get well beneath the surface. We have had a considerable number of histories of American invention. Some have been built about the life-stories of inventors from Franklin and Whitney to Edison, a method which includes too much biographical detail. Some have been written as a series of adventure stories, like Mr. Waldemar Kaempffert's successful book. Of late years the idea of invention as essentially a social process has gained ground, and must, of course, be accepted by anyone who carefully studies the subject. But Mr. Burlingame is the first writer to bring out clearly the fact that invention is not only social in origin, the work of a multiplicity of hands and forces rather than of a few leaping minds, but that it has grand social and political consequences. In the United States invention, which first did much to make the country genuinely, as well as nominally, independent of Europe, rapidly knit it together as a well unified economic organism. It shortened distances, half-annihilated State lines, bridged sectional gaps, rendered communities interdependent if not homogeneous. All this was accomplished between Franklin's old age and Edison's youth. When the Civil War came, invention had already made permanent disunion a preposterous anachronism, had rendered the end of the war inevitable before the first gun was fired. That is Mr. Burlingame's central thesis; not altogether original, of course, but sound, stated with considerable novelty, and excellent in giving his book a pattern.

The thesis is never ridden too hard, and for the most part Mr. Burlingame is content to write straight factual history without reëmphasizing his polar idea. He tells the story of a number of inventions or discoveries, such as Dr. Long's and Dr. Morton's of anesthesia, and Goodyear's of vulcanization of rubber, which have no evident relation to national unification. He goes into careful detail with other inventions, using the latest monographic works and trying realistically to dispel old myths and misunderstandings. Indeed, his union of scholarship and hard sense makes this the best merely factual summary in existence of the work of American inventors between 1765 and 1865. He does full justice to John Fitch and Colonel John Stevens, among steamboat inventors, as against Robert Fulton. He appraises accurately the comparative credit to be given Cyrus H. McCormick and Obed Hussey as inventors of reaping-machines. They worked independently and they both succeeded admirably; when McCormick swung into the lead as a manufacturer, it was largely because he had the sagacity to choose Chicago as the seat of his principal works. Mr. Burlingame brings out the immense debt that the telegraph owed to Joseph Henry. If the telegraph can be called an American rather than a British invention, it was not because S. F. B. Morse was an abler man than Charles Wheatstone, but because America possessed Henry. The last-named was a scientist and a great one, while Morse was but an ingenious combiner of other men's discoveries. When he comes to the sewing-machine, the author judiciously separates the merit due Elias Howe from that due Isaac Merrit Singer. Both were inventors of memorable talent; but the former excelled in mechanical devices, while the latter should be immortal chiefly as the man who invented installment buying.

The two main forces propelling invention in America have been the necessity for conquering distances, and the necessity for meeting a chronic labor shortage. It is to the former that Mr. Burlingame gives the most attention. He does not forget the Conestoga wagon, forerunner of the prairie schooner, though he does leave out the Concord coach. He makes it clear that although the locomotive was invented in England, it required a deal of adaptation to the American scene; and that railroad men like Stevens, Evans, and Dearborn had a peculiarly American vision. In this connection he might have mentioned that Peter Cooper built his pioneer "Tom Thumb" partly because English locomotives could not make the sharp curves of the Baltimore & Ohio. Robert L. Stevens's invention of the T-rail is allotted due place, though not his equally original ferry-slip. Mr. Burlingame gives generous space to the shipbuilding craft. On the controversial question whether the clipper ship was copied from French models, he takes an emphatic stand. "The clipper as a whole—and it cannot be regarded otherwise—with hull, rig, and system of manning, was an American device." One implement in conquering the distances (and exploiting the animal resources) of a raw country is the firearm. The story, no longer so new as it once was, of how the Pennsylvania-German rifle, a really momentous invention, helped win the Revolution, is retold here with spirit and accuracy. So also is the story of Sam Colt's six-shooters, which did so much to subdue the West, and of the artillery of Thomas J. Rodman and Robert P. Parrott. Nor does the author forget to explain just how American newspapermen, dealing with communities scattered over wide areas, invented systems of news-gathering, printing, and newspaper-distribution all their own.

Invention, as we said at the outset, may be viewed under a number of different lights. But the best light is that which minimizes its episodic, accidental, and personal features, and brings out its significance as a broad and continuous movement. Mr. Burlingame treats it from this point of view, and succeeds better than any predecessor in clothing its history with philosophic interest. He makes it clear that it was one of the great shaping forces of the nation, and that the direction it took governed to a great extent the form of American economics, society, and even politics. Of all the books on the subject, his is—though perhaps not the most interesting or dramatic—the one best worth reading, a solid addition to historical interpretation. It should be added that his publishers have given the book a wealth of effective illustrations.



Couch's rock-drilling machine, the first power rock-drill, patented in 1849. Later improved, played an important part in drilling of the Hoosac Tunnel, 1867.

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Life and Danny O'Neill

NO STAR IS LOST. By James T. Farrell. New York: The Vanguard Press. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by GEORGE STEVENS

NO detail whatsoever, of dialogue, description, or incident, is omitted in Mr. Farrell's new saga of the O'Neills and O'Flahertys. Readers of "A World I Never Made" will know what to expect of its sequel (which can be read independently), covering in 637 pages one year in the lives of Mr. Farrell's Chicago Irish characters. It is extremely interesting; it is as good realism as anybody in America can write. The only question is, does it justify its enormous length?

"No Star Is Lost" is a sprawling, brawling, full-bodied, meaty hunk of life. All the characters are drawn with complete fidelity—old Mrs. O'Flaherty, with her trips to the cemetery, her imaginary conversations with her dead husband, her stops for beer on the way home; her daughter, Liz, married to Jim O'Neill, living in a slum with a new baby every year, ridden by poverty and superstition; the other daughter, Margaret, drinking in secret because a man did her wrong; the O'Neill boys, Bill and Danny—particularly Danny, with his daydreams centered in baseball; and Uncle Al, who tries to hold the family together but has the worst temper of the lot.

"Photographic realism" used to be a term of abuse, but photography has become an art, and Mr. Farrell's variety of realism cannot be disparaged or underestimated; he's too good at his job. He gives an immediate sense of life, the smell of sweat and liquor breath, the look of worn clothes hanging in the backyard, the feel of sitting in the bleachers watching the White Sox, the sound of an Irish family fight. He minces no words, of however many letters. He knows all about his people, the first-generation shanty Irish, the second generation trying to be respectable, the third generation, in young Danny, developing sensibilities. Danny, in fact, is the best character in the book. His agonies of conscience when Bill steals fifty dollars from Aunt Margaret, his conviction that he is damned because he doesn't report this event at confession; his fights with the tough kids, his feelings about his family, his long hours playing imaginary baseball games — everything about Danny is handled with an understanding and penetration that puts him among the half dozen memorable boys of American fiction.

All this is written apparently out of memory—a detailed and inexhaustible memory—but it is memory, not imagination. It is a picture of life, not a vision. To call Mr. Farrell a genius, as one critic does in a portentous phrase quoted on the jacket, is to overlook this distinction, to imply that a genius needs only a capacity for total and accurate recall. And this memory has its drawbacks. Mr. Farrell writes entirely too much. Scenes are repeated in all essentials, without casting new light on the characters or advancing the action, just because they must have happened that way. The book is much too long. And if you have read one novel by Mr. Farrell, you have really read them all. This one is as interesting as "A World I Never Made," but no more so; what keeps you going is your interest in Danny.

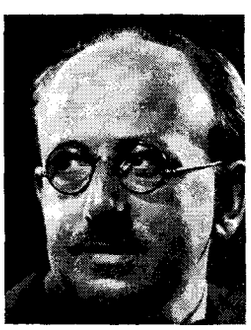
Although he writes of proletarians, Mr. Farrell has not, in "No Star Is Lost," written a proletarian novel in the sense of a novel of ideas. He offers no solution for the poverty-stricken O'Neills; he does not imply that the economic system is at fault. The reader is of course free to infer this, or anything else he wants to read into it; but even at the end, when the O'Neills' slum-bred children are caught in an epidemic, the author concentrates on straight narrative. It is not necessarily an adverse criticism to say that Mr. Farrell has no intellectual message, no moral to preach, either economic or ethical. It is a point, however, that his work lacks imagination, that it sprawls through too much length and breadth without enough depth, that we read on and on, with interest to be sure, but without the essential illumination of experience which we get from fiction at its best.

Hungarian Robin Hood

A WOMAN SCREAMED. By Robert Neumann. New York: The Dial Press. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT

AT an inn near the Galician frontier of Hungary a party of Austrian officers in the company of a few local noblemen is relieving the tedium of provincial quarters with not unusual festivities. As the night wears on and the wine ceases to disguise the banality of military conversation, one of their number remembers a pretty young actress who has come in on the coach. Not unwillingly, she is fetched from her room to give at least a semblance of gayety to a drab evening. In experience she is quite the equal of her cynical hosts, but she has her own way of winning their favors. At the slightest provocation, an insulting comment from a Viennese dandy or the sight of a mouse, she screams. Upstairs in the inn a man is awakened by her repeated alarums. In his simplicity he takes them for cries of distress and sets out to rescue threatened womanhood. For his pains he receives a broken head from the amused and sophisticated Austrian gentlemen.



Robert Neumann

The man is Rosza Sandor, a simple-minded horse-trader who has just returned to his native Hungary from Poland, where he has seen the crushing of a people under Russian tyranny. He expects better things at home. His innocence cannot fathom the meaning of justice and injustice. It seems unjust to him that a screaming woman should be left to her fate. The incident assumes in his unlettered mind the importance of a mission, the outcome of which involves the whole Hungarian people. Resolved to bring the case before the local magistrate, he goes to the office of the Deputy Public Prosecutor, a clever, ambitious, and extremely dissatisfied young lawyer, Dr. Louis Kossuth.

Thus the stage is set for the melodrama of the Hungarian Revolution. The meeting between Sandor and Kossuth is the match that starts the conflagration, and from that point this novel is a fanfare of extravagant romance. The coldly calculating Kossuth soon deserts his humble client, and rides his opportunities in more important centers, climbing dizzily to the heights of popular dictator. Sandor, caught in the meshes of incomprehensible and unjust laws, escapes miraculously to become a generous bandit, a Robin Hood, who controls the great Hungarian plains. Again and again, faithful to his mission, he comes to Kossuth's aid, each time to be newly deserted. Wild deeds, superhuman triumphs, incredible defeats mark Sandor's course across the history of his country, which is left in the end still the vassal kingdom of Austria.

So much valor, so many desperate engagements and fantastic miracles, make this a most high-spirited and exciting novel, and the constant contrast between Sandor's naiveté and Kossuth's treachery does not lessen its rapidity. It is all rather like a Hollywood concoction from the days of Douglas Fairbanks, and would have much the same effect were it not for the intrusions of the author's heavy-handed irony attempting constantly to point social morals. His historical veracity can hardly be commended, but as a racy revivifying of legend it is excellent.

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Traffic in Murder

DYNASTY OF DEATH. By Taylor Caldwell. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. $2.75.

Reviewed by GEORGE DANGERFIELD

THE armaments industry is a subject which fiction does well to take up; and Mr. Caldwell's attack is handled with the patience and skill of a prosecuting attorney. In order to establish his case he builds up a careful background, introducing a number of facts and side-issues which a defense attorney would probably characterize—and an impartial judge perhaps disallow—as irrelevant, incompetent, and all the rest of it. But when the whole picture is complete, you have to admit that he has been handling with considerable ability several interacting and at times rather refractory themes. Theme 1—Ernest Barbour's childhood in England and the emigration of himself and his family to America; together with the manner in which he assumed control of his uncle's little firearms business and expanded it into the large and lethal concern of Barbour & Bouchard. Theme 2—the conflict between Ernest and his idealistic brother Martin, and Martin's attempt to relieve the awful slavery into which Ernest has plunged his foreign workers.

Meanwhile the Barbour family intermarry with the children of Armand Bouchard, original partner in the firearms business, and the reader drifts about in a genealogical sea, emerging, half-drowned, to learn how Ernest blights the lives of his own children, while in Martin's son he finds a character brutal enough to serve his purposes, and even to marry his daughter against her will. Then the genealogical sea heaves a little and yet another theme emerges—this time it is the three Bouchards who, being very French and very subtle and not entirely credible, gain such control that, on Ernest's death, they are able to change the firm's name from Barbour & Bouchard to Bouchard & Sons. And all the time, with infinite care, the growth of a great armaments business has been set before us, not without a broad likeness to historical fact.

One's chief criticism of this novel is that it pays the industry a compliment which, though backhanded and unconscious, is none the less a compliment. The author assumes that the industry requires, as its representative, something rather terrific in the way of a man. In all the pages, and they are 797, in which he deals with Ernest Barbour, he never quite reduces him to human stature. Ernest is a devil, the personification of a great industrial evil; and when a devil goes about the devil's work, something is missing. What we miss in this instance is the ultimate historical irony: on the one hand, the traffic in murder; on the other, a trafficker who is just as muddled and petty and able to compound with his conscience as the rest of us. Only a genius could in a novel of this sort create or maintain such an ironical contrast. Mr. Caldwell has chosen the safer way; he provides his industry with a superman, surrounded by a lesser group of supermen and superwomen, all living on a plane just a little removed from our own.

Fiction, of course, cannot avoid super-reality, which it is its business to attain. But the plane upon which these people live is not one of super-reality, but of slight but consistent fantasy. We have to accept them, or the novel would collapse; and it is pleasant to record that they are not at all difficult to accept. They move easily in and out of the narrative, and are adequate to the narrative, though not to the author's intention. Had they been *that,* this would have been a great novel. As it is, few readers will, I think, deny that it is a thoroughly good one, soundly constructed and in a sound tradition.

From the jacket design of "Dynasty of Death."

"Stoyan Christowe's dream fixed upon America" . . . (Drawing by Edward Shenton.)

Foreigner Everywhere

THIS IS MY COUNTRY. By Stoyan Christowe. New York: Carrick & Evans. 1938. $2.75.

Reviewed by FLETCHER PRATT

BASICALLY, there are two subjects in literature: the struggle to attain a dream ending with achievement, which is popular fiction; and the discovery that the dream is an illusion, which is intellectual writing, in fiction or out of it. Stoyan Christowe attained his dream and found it was not altogether an illusion, and there is a freshness about the result that makes his unpretentious autobiography altogether charming.

He was born in a remote Macedonian village, to which one day a wandering laborer returned in strange clothes. He brought little slips of blue paper which could be magically converted into gold Napoleons and wonderful tales about a place called America, where the people were spherical and cyclopean, but surrounded by material marvels and living in an air of spaciousness and drive. Stoyan Christowe's dream therefore fixed upon America; and, aged thirteen, he set off to realize it. He landed in a flop-house in St. Louis, worked twelve hours a day for a dollar, then joined a gang of gandy-dancers in Montana—and he loved it. His only complaint was that he was not becoming American fast enough, even when papering the walls of his room with little slips on which he had written the English words seen but not yet assimilated.

Well, he made it, via Valparaiso University and book reviewing during the intellectual ferments of the twenties, then went back to Bulgaria as a newspaper correspondent. There he tasted the expatriate's fate, which is to be a stranger in every country. But he was not a bitter stranger in any, and in his role of perpetual foreigner is good enough observer and analyst to remind us that a crass material civilization is not without value.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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Books in the News

IT is a commonplace that the tide of fiction has turned from the art-for-art's-sake of the twenties to the sing-me-a-song-of-social-significance of the thirties. Generalizations about what, for want of a better word, is called non-fiction, are more difficult to produce. Publication lists show a decline in the number of titles published in general literature, a rise in books on economics and politics; but the statistics are not overwhelming, and it would be hard to make out a case that the trend they indicate is supported by what people actually read.

Unquestionably the average reader's interest in current events is keener than it was ten years ago. This is unmistakably reflected in publishers' catalogues and in book reviews, and to some extent in the best seller lists; but it is curious that it should not be more clearly reflected in the latter. Everything that has happened since 1929 has sharpened the citizen's sense of a personal relation to the government, his knowledge of the way he is affected by what the government does. And everything that has happened since 1933 has whetted his apprehension of the next war, a war in which, he has gradually become convinced, there will be no neutrals and no non-combatants.

The answer is, obviously, that readers are getting most of their politics and economics in the newspapers. When people are watching from day to day to see whether Hitler has invaded Czechoslovakia, most of them are too much concerned with the immediate future to look into backgrounds, to read books on even the relatively short histories of Czechoslovakia and Nazi Germany. And, of course, a real newspaper fan—for instance, someone who can stick with every word of the evidence in the Hines trial—just hasn't got time to read books.

Books cannot compete with newspapers in timeliness; that is one reason why the best seller lists contain only a few random titles in economics and politics, instead of being full of them. Authors and publishers who rush to press with hastily prepared books put together for their supposed news value are likely to meet with a reception unbridled in its apathy. Occasionally a book, not hastily prepared, and covering events which the papers have not reported, is genuine news—for instance, Edgar Snow's "Red Star over China." But even now, almost a year after publication and in the midst of Japan's invasion of China, one of the most widely read books in America is a Chinese book of ideas on life in general—Lin Yutang's "The Importance of Living." While the world hangs on the words of the British Prime Minister, America reads Margaret Halsey's "With Malice toward Some," a venture in foreign relations which has no connection with foreign affairs.

However, the book reader—even the casual reader, who follows the tide—has an advantage in understanding the news. A reader of John Gunther's "Inside Europe"—to mention perhaps the most widely read recent book in its category—is in a better position to interpret reports from Germany and England than one who has not read any good book on current history in Europe. A reader of Vincent Sheean's "Personal History" has an idea of what is involved in the work of newspaper correspondents which gives him perspective on the news from abroad.

But timeliness is not everything. As Dorothy Thompson has been urging, "The Federalist" is still a book in the news for those who want to understand what is going on in America. As for what is going on in Europe, the definitive history will not be written for many years. Meanwhile there are several books on the origins of the last war which cast a strong if indirect light on the origins of the next, and some of them may vitally influence American action if another war breaks out in Europe. All of which is to say that newspapers cannot compete with books, and that books in the news are not necessarily the ones just off the press.

Nocturne

BY MARIE DE L. WELCH

THE lights of cities belie much of darkness;
No city seen at night is not a little beautiful.
For darkness, see by daylight, when the smears on walls,
The rubbish and the spit on streets show with the walls and stones.
Night will change anything, change you,
Hide weary details, change rubbish color,
Mask the most stupid danger in strangeness, in brilliance.

We are not people of the night, not ever.
I tell you we can not see at all in the dark.
We cannot see at all; we have made these lights
So that we can walk without seeing, and seem to live.
Our cities are not built for vision, not for daylight:
Here in the daylight we can see the dark, the dust
And all of all the faces.

That fat-face, that tremulous lump-face,
Terrible, pitiful, menacing, by day: mud,
By night is almost animal.
No rushing, grabbing, chiseling, none of all the effort
Put light between those lids all day,
But now under the artificial light the eye-balls shine
Almost as if eager, almost as if alive.

That rat-face, that hunted killer's face,
Terrible, pitiful, most menacing, by day: death,
By night is only murder.
Under the oblique night-lights in the dark, that face
Seems dangerous, seems dreadful, but seems to be alive.
The arc-light puts a gleam between those narrowed lids.
By day that rat-face with sharp leaden eyes is dead,
That would not have the will for murder, that
Is dead, is tool for death.

Be tired and go home, sit down,—and between the book,
Between the cards, between the glass, in through the walls
All the dark, all the day, all the faces,
All never to be lost, all come.
You must go where the artificial lights, the near lights,
The lights of men change men, change you,
Cover the darkness of some anguish, make these faces
Half-seen only, and somewhat dangerous, somewhat incredible,
Something like the faces of men.

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Letters to the Editor: *Dickens and Tobacco; "Designing Women"*

Mr. Weller's Pipe

SIR:—In the "Life of Charles Dickens" which Stephen Leacock wrote a few years ago and which brought such comfort to us old Dickensians (I first read him over fifty years ago) who had begun to fear that the author who had given us so many hours of happiness was no longer appreciated, there appears the following:

> Tobacco meant so little to him that the characters in his book never get a fair share of it.

I recently noted an amusing confirmation of his careless treatment of this subject. It occurs in the twentieth chapter of "Pickwick Papers," and as I have never happened to see any previous reference to it, I quote as follows:

"Having delivered this parental advice with great pathos, Mr. Weller senior refilled his pipe from a tin box he carried in his pocket; and *lighting his pipe from the ashes of the old one,* commenced smoking at a great rate."

Let any pipe smoker try to figure out how this was done and "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" would be more easily solved! As spots on the sun detract nothing from the brilliance of that orb, so these little slips of the great writer but endear him to his faithful and grateful though possibly diminished readers.

CHARLES A. AUSTIN.

Scarsdale, N. Y.

Yes . . .

SIR:—The addition of letters to the Double-Crostics squares has proved both an eye and a time saver. Mr. Hartwick's suggestion for a "simple shake-up" would undoubtedly be equally advantageous.

M. F. OVERTON.

Flushing, N. Y.

. . . And No

SIR:—PLEASE do not make any change in the format of Mrs. Kingsley's Perfect Puzzles!

CAROLYN WELLS.

New York City.

Miss Byers Replies

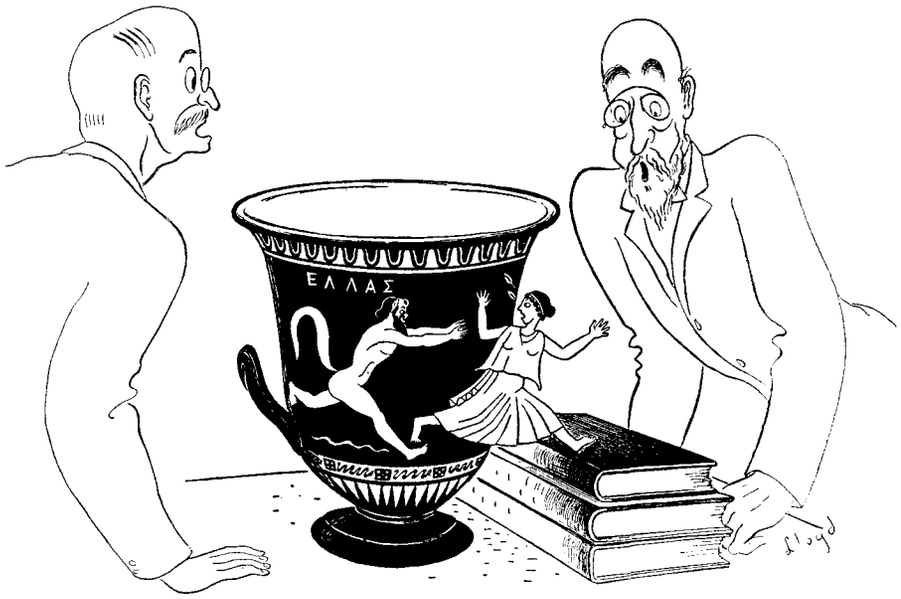
SIR:—I read Elizabeth Hawes' provocative review of my book, "Designing Women, the Art, Technique and Cost of Being Beautiful," with great interest.

For the sake of the record and clarity in general, however, I would like to point out a few instances where Miss Hawes misquoted me. They are as follows:

On page 220, I said: "Colors, *except in sports and evening clothes,* are only for the rich." My remark that I was glad colors were coming back occurred in a discussion of evening clothes, on page 173.

I did warn women about trousers. But on page 67 I said: "We are not going to prohibit trousers altogether."

I did say, on page 190, speaking of the housewife, "We know you . . . consider the smart world well lost for love . . . just at the beginning while your husband's getting his start . . ." but I did *not* recommend slumping into a romantic, sartorial decline.



"I think, Professor, this calls for a footnote to your essay on Keats."

As to the collarless fashions, they were recommended for short necks, while the etiquette part of the book, where I take collars for granted, was written for average women. I had meant to make it clear that, to me, becomingness comes first—first, last, and all the time.

The chapter on "How to Get Your Money's Worth" is like the French phrasebook, "France on Ten Words a Day," that tells you how to handle this and that situation but rings with the refrain ". . . or ask the concierge." I say repeatedly, go to a reliable house.

MARGARETTA BYERS.

Westfield, N. J.

E. V. Lucas

SIR:—We hope to publish early next year a collection of the Letters of the late Mr. E. V. Lucas, and in order to make it as comprehensive as possible we should be most grateful to any of your readers who may possess letters from Mr. Lucas if they would kindly allow us to make use of them. Mr. Lucas had many good friends in America and we feel sure that some of the letters he wrote to them would be of considerable interest to the public. We would have the letters copied and the originals would be returned to the owners as soon as possible.

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Comberback

SIR:— Old Q's reference to Coleridge's enlistment in the Fifteenth Light Dragoons, under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberback (and "in the throes of a temporary period of intemperance") sent this reader to that endlessly fascinating tome, "British Authors of the Nineteenth Century," all over again. "British Authors" (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1936) resembles the Dictionary of National Biography equipped with pictures and conversation (Alice's prescription for a successful book), streamlines and sound effects. The Comberback episode is there, likewise an account of Coleridge's projected Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna, and his subsidizing by Darwin's cousins, the sons of Josiah Wedgwood. (It's time to reread Miss E. B. C. Jones's "The Wedgwood Medallion," a paler predecessor of Angela Thirkell's "Summer Half.")

It was not surprising to find this brilliant and penetrating study of Lamb's "archangel, a little damaged" signed M. A. deF. The same initials appear beneath the sketches of Beardsley, the Brontës, Blake, the Brownings, W. S. Gilbert, Hazlitt, Huxley, Lionel Johnson, the Rossettis, Shelley, Trelawny, and others. This was my first introduction to the work of Miriam Allen deFord,—this and a reference in the article on WPA guides in the *Review* some weeks ago.

E. F. WALBRIDGE.

Montgomery, Vt.

P. S. Comberback suggests a reaction to the present tidal wave of upswept coiffures.

Samuel Putnam Avery

SIR:—I am writing the life of Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904) and should like to hear from your readers of any source material on his early life, especially the period before 1867 when he was a book illustrator and engraver.

RUTH SIEBEN-MORGEN.

Westfield, N. J.

The Bunyan Tankard

SIR:—The whereabouts of this relic of the "Dreamer of Bedford" is now established, and I have photographs of it.

I would like to thank you and all who have helped me to locate the Tankard.

FRANK MOTT HARRISON.

Hove, England.

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A Vibrant Memory

REMEMBERING. By Nathalie Sedgwick Colby. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

THERE is a ruthless forthrightness to Mrs. Colby's recollections which gives them both their zest and their value. A woman who has felt passionately and suffered greatly, the mainspring of whose being is love—for the Sedgwick family and the New England home from which she sprang, for the husband whom she divorced, though she makes it plain he is still the center of her universe, for her children, for her friends—she has a quality of clear-sightedness, a ruthless honesty with herself as with others, a lack of inhibitions, and a flashing brilliance of epithet that make her book pulse with life. There is no dull page to it, for everything Mrs. Colby experienced, saw, and felt takes on vibrancy from the intensity of her reactions. In Nathalie Colby one is aware of so all-embracing an eagerness and interest in living as was able to make a gay adventure of poverty and even to strip defeat of final despair.

Mrs. Colby is that not so unusual phenomenon, a New Englander whose nature has sloughed off repressions and given itself lavishly to the emotions. She came of an honored and notable family, which from the time that the first Theodore Sedgwick erected his house in Stockbridge, Mass., in 1780, to the present has been distinguished for its culture, its achievements, and its gracious living. The pictures she reconstructs from hearsay of the family in its early generations, and from her own recollections of her gay, charming, and impetuous mother, married to an Italian who adored her, widowed, married a second time to an American and divorced from him, and carrying on with a courage that would have done credit to her daughter, and of her own girlhood and youth among Sedgwick aunts, uncles, and cousins are delightful in their vivacity and spiritedness. "Love was the habit of our household," said an early Catherine Sedgwick, a habit which apparently persisted through the years. The easy and generous hospitality of the family and the charm of its members brought into their circle persons of note of all sorts. Daniel Webster, Fanny Kemble, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Holmes, Matthew Arnold, these and many others walk through Mrs. Colby's pages long before her marriage to Bainbridge Colby and his quick rise to success brought her in contact with Washington officialdom.

In a novel entitled "For Life" Mrs. Colby a few years ago drew a picture of marriage that, stripped of the paraphernalia of romance, appears here again in her portrayal of a union that began in idyllic mood and that went on the rocks of her husband's absorption in a public career. It is a tragic tale which her irrepressible veracity lays bare, tragic in its disillusionments, its clinging to hope, and its frustrated devotion. But before her marriage went down in disaster Mrs. Colby lived vividly and exultantly in the triumphs of her husband. The New York days of rising wealth and social success, the Washington days of stately functions and impressive contacts as wife of the Secretary of State, with a young woman trying to conform to standards of formal living alien to her experience and tastes, are all set down here with their humors

At Nathalie Sedgwick's marriage to Bainbridge Colby. From "Remembering."

and their luster still upon them. Some constant fiber of truth in Mrs. Colby refused to be dazzled by official position, and her impressions of the Washington scene have a refreshing candor. She has, too, the gift of the revealing phrase, and in a few lines can vividly isolate personality. Thus of Spain's Ambassador, Riano, she says: "Rings of experience staved him like a tree. . . . Not one archive would ever be pried out of him. Outwardly he remains definite outlines and a smell of eau de cologne, the impalpable finish of a well-dressed man." Cardinal Gibbons was "God's statesman; the kind of man who could domesticate a nation's vision"; "Mrs. Hoover made me think of a composite Girl Scout when she walked, her braid of hair wound over a part, a large girlishness about her"; "All [Mrs. Coolidge's] energies regimented in an official drill, she photographed well on a sensitive plate —either flesh or metal. . . . Our official conversation established firmly for the millionth time how the sun shone every day in Washington, and how God and Mr. Coolidge were going along on parallel lines."

Mrs. Colby's book ends with the final débâcle of her marriage, the days of straitened circumstances but still generous, if simple, hospitality with her daughters in New York, and the successful launching of her literary career. It ends as it begins with the shadow of the Old House in Stockbridge lying on it and with a sense of adventure still in store. A lively and interesting book.

Nave of New England

PURITAN CITY. By Frances Winwar. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. 1938. $3.

Reviewed by HASSOLDT DAVIS

THE excellent author of "Gallows Hill" and "Poor Splendid Wings" has brought to this history of Salem her full talents as novelist and biographer, and because of them her book has the fluency of a novel with the biographical vision that makes history live, that peoples it credibly. She possesses not only the conscience for documentary research and the wit to accord its discordant findings, but the ability to strike with it a balance between what is most informing to her thesis and most picturesque.

Salem has been dully sung by scrupulous historians; here the Puritan city of two and three hundred years ago assumes more life than it has today, as Miss Winwar recounts the bigotry and ambition, the true piety and false democracy that built it. It was called Naumkeag by the Indians, a name which the Reverend Mr. White construed as a corruption, inspired by God, of the Hebrew "Nahum Keike" —the Bosom of Consolation. But there was small consolation for those early renegades of religion who settled it under Roger Conant in 1626. They had no experience in prospering on land or sea. The Indians menaced them, and even in that first year there were troublemakers among them such as the adventurers at Merry Mount who drove their Maypole through the very heart of Puritanism. Fleeing the intolerance of England, John Winthrop's Puritans established an even harsher variety of it under their Salem theocracy, which they termed a commonwealth, persecuting all who were not "the choice grain," lopping the ears off Quakers, jailing and flogging them to death. They returned ill for ill to the Indians, and there was for many years a bounty for each heathen scalp a Puritan brought to hang on the courthouse wall.

The climax of intolerance was, of course, the Salem witchcraft trials, when in the year 1692 nineteen men and women were hanged and many tortured, mostly

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upon the evidence of several hysterical little girls, and by the definite instigation of the elders who desired the "witches'" land or were covetous of their power. No one was safe during the course of that infamous year; there were 150 accused in the jail at one time and 200 more suspected. It was not until the wife of Governor Phips was called an accomplice of the Devil that the reaction set in, with the result that most of the judges eventually acknowledged that they had erred. The operation was successful, but the patient died.

Democracy was of slow growth, but it grew inevitably upon the basis of hardship shared by all alike. Economic and religious distinctions were impossible to maintain in a semi-wilderness where the group was imperilled by whatever physical or moral hazard afflicted the individual. The turn of the century brought new horizons before the narrow eyes of Salem. Cotton Mather, who had been zealous to perceive witchcraft, now introduced the occult art of inoculation against pestilences. Schools flourished, cod-fishery throve, and the privateers did a lucrative business upon the high seas. When the first challenge of the Revolution was flung across North Bridge, the men of Salem were strong enough to humble Leslie's troops by permitting them only to cross the river and march promptly back again.

Salem was not the greatest of the seafaring towns, but she did her part in bringing the commerce of the East to young America. Huge ships, for that day, sailed from her harbor to carry otter skins, bêche de mer, and rum around the horn, and return laden with silks and spices. The gospel sailed with them, for the first American missionaries to the Orient left from Salem Harbor, among them that heroic Adoniram Judson who was imprisoned for two years with a hundred others and one dead lion in a Burmese jail, yet held to his faith so ardently that his later freedom netted him seven thousand convert souls.

It is the men of this history, superbly portrayed, that make it such dramatic reading. The partial life of Nathaniel Hawthorne, as told by Miss Winwar, is exceptional biography. The curse put upon his family by the "witch" Rebecca Nurse whom an elder Hathorne had condemned, the compulsion of Nathaniel to put the "W" in his name, his loneliness, his romance, his friends Emerson, Alcott, and Thoreau, the Brook Farm experiment where Hawthorne came to disbelieve that "man might know the lovely face of nature and in a union with her bring forth transcendental fruit"—all are illuminated with the penetrant beam of Miss Winwar's insight. The Salem of this book is not the memento mori of the Essex and Peabody Museums, but a vital and brave and terrible town, the nave of New England.

The U. S. in the Middle

IOWA—A Guide to the Hawkeye State. Federal Writers' Project. New York: The Viking Press. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by PHIL STONG

MR. RAYMOND KRESENSKY has gone to the right places, talked to the right people, and done a superb job in text, pictures, and production on this item of the Government handbooks of American states and localities. For some reason unfathomable to me Iowa has picked 1938 as a centenary year; it separated from the Territory of Wisconsin in 1838 but it didn't become a State till 1846 and the separation from Wisconsin Territory marked no particular assumption of a national consciousness by a group of people who already knew they were Iowans or Iowayans, hated Yankees, bickered with all the neighbors, called out the troops against Missouri, discarded Minnesota, and generally manifested a sublime conviction that Iowa was quite a little state for its size.

The conviction has become fixed with the years, and at the risk of seeming a professional Iowan I must say that this guidebook shows that there is something in the idea. The State Historical Society, which sponsored the book, hasn't left out a thing of importance that might further the notion. All the "musts" are down—pigs, literacy, motors per capita, horses, and corn of course. That it also has lakes and small mountains and is one of the most beautiful states in the country is brought to the attention of people who think that the Midwest is only a colorless, flat spot in the middle of America.

Iowa is a warlike little state not quite a third the size of Germany. It has a population of ten or twelve million, but unfortunately three-fourths of the Iowans live in Pasadena, New York, or up here in Connecticut. This is because of the climate, which has a range of 140 degrees Fahrenheit—that is, almost everyone there of any age has seen it a hundred and twenty or so in the shade during the corn-making months and twenty below in the winter when we fatten up the catfish.

When Calhoun was spouting about States' Rights in the Senate, Iowa was already preparing to call out the troops of its sovereign empire to repel a Missourian farmer who claimed a bee-tree (or blackberry patch, in some versions) above his supposed boundary on the Iowa-Missouri line. It was settled amicably—so Iowa won. Our state also repelled the Confederates at the Battle of Pulaski. A good deal of bloodshed was occasioned in both cases by the Iowa chigger, the most ferocious of the carnivora.

Jesse James went through one time on his way to rob the Birmingham bank of its desk blotters—he certainly wouldn't have come to an Iowa bank for money—

"All the 'musts' are down—pigs, literacy, motors per capita, horses, and corn" . . . (Photomontage of pictures from Iowa—A Guide to the Hawkeye State.)"

and the embattled farmers did most of the gang in. Jack London, the sailorman, got into difficulties in the turbulent waters which swirl around my farm on the Great Bend of the Des Moines River while he was with Coxey's Army. I know the "dangerous" place—when I was seven or eight I used to wade there and pick clams.

We have had mound-builders and Sioux, a superior bunch of Atheists who tried to start a community, the Amana Colonies which have successful Primitive Christian settlements, the spick-and-span little Dutch Shoe town of Pella which produces the best ham known to man, Abe Lincoln as a campaigner, De Soto and La Salle, the only President born west of the Mississippi, practically all of the Secretaries of Agriculture—all named Wallace — the Mormon hegira, Black Hawk and Keokuk, Lillian Russell, Dvorak, some countesses, Brookhart, Bob Feller, the first state fair in America—the Iowa Fair—and anything you would care for in the way of history, romance, or statistics.

Nearly all of them are here with only one or two sad omissions. There were some exciting days when Iowa decided to be a seaport and fiddled with the Des Moines River Navigation Company. Henry Clay Dean is skimped, and in "Literature" one of the best teachers of writing in the state—Lewis Worthington Smith of Drake University—has not been mentioned, though the long-legged processions of the Drake Relay Meets get sufficient attention.

Generally, if you happen to like the United States, this is the best way I know of to find out what it is like in the middle.

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The Birth of an Empire

BUILDING THE BRITISH EMPIRE: To the End of the First Empire. By James Truslow Adams. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. $3.50.

Reviewed by JOSEPH R. STRAYER

REMEMBERING Mr. Adams's long-continued interest in American history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the reader might assume that this new book is restricted to the same period and that it describes only the actual acquisition of the first British colonies. Mr. Adams, however, has given his title its broadest possible meaning. He has sought to discover "what the British are like, what made them what they are, and how it came about that a nation which only three centuries ago numbered about only half of the present population of New York or London, spread out from their island to rule a fourth of all the peoples of the world." In his attempt to answer these questions he has written a history of England from prehistoric times to 1783—a history in which the details of colonial expansion and administration occupy very little space. Moreover, with so much ground to be covered, the mere recital of facts has left Mr. Adams comparatively little room to exercise his considerable talents of interpretation. Much of the book is so compressed that it is little more than a textbook.

It is not a particularly good textbook. Mr. Adams's training and abilities are not suited to the task. In the effort to compress his material he has written clumsy and obscure paragraphs. For example, he describes the two early types of jury without making it clear that one was for civil and the other for criminal procedure. In his discussion of the origin of the Tudors no one could gather that Henry VII was descended on his mother's side from John of Gaunt, from the statement that "as there were no heirs in the male line of John of Gaunt the young exiled Duke had the best claim to the disputed throne."

Mr. Adams is not familiar with the early period of English history and he did not take the time to master the authorities on the subject. As a result, the first half of the book is so full of errors that it cannot be consulted with safety. Perhaps it was a mere slip of the pen which led him to credit Augustus with organizing the government of Britain a half century before the conquest of the island by Rome. But what can be said for an author who cites the leading authority on Magna Carta and then makes the astonishing statement that Magna Carta guaranteed a jury trial to freemen, when the authority cited has spent pages in proving that trial by jury in criminal cases did not yet exist and that the clause in question was later interpreted as *forbidding* the trial of peers by jury?

Mr. Adams's attempts to explain the character of the English people by references to their history are not much more successful than his recital of the facts. Thus it seems rather doubtful that the origin of English tolerance can be ascribed to the permission given to the conquered Danes of the tenth century to keep their own laws. This was a regular practice at the time, and if the existence of different codes of law in the same country breeds tolerance, then France, Germany, and Italy should be far ahead of England, since they allowed provincial laws and customs to endure for five centuries after England had attained uniformity. It is also unfortunate that Mr. Adams repeatedly cites the conference between Wat Tyler and Richard II as an example of "the great English trait of compromise and the willingness to talk things over." Since Tyler was assassinated and all the promises made by the king to his followers were broken, this precedent should hardly encourage modern leaders "to talk things over" with the government. An enemy of England might suggest that the Czechs just now are in Wat Tyler's position, but Mr. Adams can scarcely have meant to imply this, since he seems to feel that the English are the second Chosen People. While seeking such far-fetched explanations, Mr. Adams neglects some of the more obvious influences on English character. To give only one example, attendance of all freemen at the shire court and service on juries used for administrative purposes gave the English remarkable training in local self-government.

The last part of the book, dealing with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is more accurate, less compressed, and better written. Here Mr. Adams is in a field which he knows well, and he gives an interesting summary of the period. But even here many of his conclusions are based on his mistaken ideas about the earlier period, and so his initial carelessness tends to vitiate the whole book. It is to be regretted that in dealing with such an important subject the author has not maintained the high standards of his previous works.

Joseph R. Strayer is associate professor of history at Princeton.

The death of Wat Tyler: "This precedent should hardly encourage modern leaders 'to talk things over' with the government" . . .

A Life in Finland

MEEK HERITAGE. By F. E. Sillanpää. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by N. L. ROTHMAN

OUR introduction to this eminent Finnish novelist is sadly marred by a disproportion between philosophy and substance which clouds the first of his works to reach us. It is evident that Sillanpää uses his novels as vehicles for a philosophic brooding upon life and the destiny of man. We hear his voice everywhere in the book, searching, soaring, making dispassionate and often brilliant commentary upon his characters. But the weight of his presence would need to be balanced by a large fictional structure, with strength of its own. In the absence of this he succeeds only in dwarfing his story. Jussi Toivola, a Finnish peasant, is followed from birth to death, through the hardships of his feudal servitude and the rigors of civil war and the struggle for liberty against imperial Russia. All of this has the potentiality of a large, powerful narrative, but somehow Sillanpää has missed it. Jussi is not studied with anything like enough detail to make him come alive; he remains a shadow and his fate is never either interesting or of consequence. The book depends for interest upon its intermittent stretches of freshly seen local color, and of Finish history and lore.

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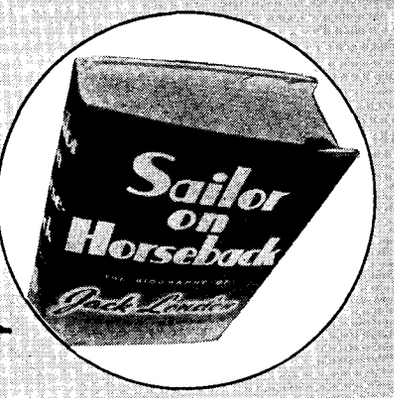
Sailor *on* Horseback



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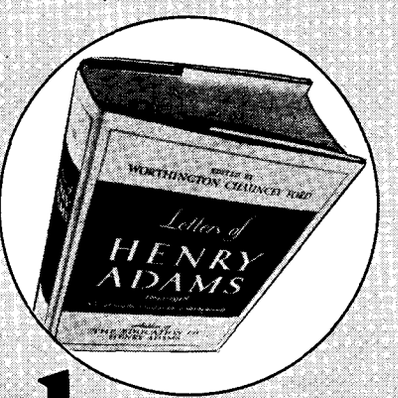

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Ideas for the Future

NINE CHAINS TO THE MOON. By R. Buckminster Fuller. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1938. $4.

Reviewed by FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

BUCKMINSTER FULLER—you are the most sensible man in New York, truly sensitive. Nature gave you antennæ, long-range finders you have learned to use. I find almost all your prognosticating nearly right—much of it dead right, and I love you for the way you prognosticate. To address you directly will be a hell of a way of reviewing your book—I know. I should write all around you, take you apart, and put you together again to show—between the lines—how much bigger my own mind is than yours and how much smarter than you I can be with it and leave the essence of your thought untouched.

But I couldn't do it if I would and I wouldn't if I could. To say that you have now a good style of your own in saying very important things is only admitting something unexpected. To say you are the most sensible man in New York isn't saying much for you—in that pack of caged fools. And everybody who knows you knows you are extraordinarily sensitive. So let's take on this outline of yours—wherein you "stick your neck out." It is the center line as well as the backbone of your remarkable, necessary, way-up and low-down on our trashy civilization.

Getting on to your "Outline":

Postulate 1. "Beamed Radio transmission of power employing gold as the reflecting surface"—I wouldn't know about that but I'll bet you would know.

2. "Population Shift"—Population shift of the British people. A good idea anyway. Probably the British half of the Teutonic race owes that much to Germany—the other half. England will still be England in a big way.

3. "Mechanical Stock Exchange"—If there is to be a stock exchange at that time, of course it will be like that. But I am betting on there being none.

4. "Broadcast Education: the main system of general educational instruction to go on the air and screen."—Dead right. The sooner the better.

5. "Mass-Production-dwelling chassis"—Yes, dwelling at the rate mechanization has progressed would arrive at a chassis—demountable rims too—in ten years for a large percentage of the caged fools. But not if I win.

6. "New Farm Mechanics: Mechanization of produce farming . . . with increased and improved quality of yield."—Good, and just common sense.

7. "Northwest spiral of civilization: a northwest spiraling motion independently maintained by each and every category of man's mechanical extensions. . . . Advanced arts (such as radio & aviation) finally trafficking across the pole. . . ."—Human nature going toward the cold. Against the human nature of yesterday. Instead of the man of the North going South to wipe out the Northerner who grew soft down there you have the man who grew soft down there moving up to conquer the man of the North—or would it be because the man of the South got tired of being conquered and himself moved North to forestall it or learn how? And I myself believe that the frontiers of the world will change to across the pole: chiefly U.S.S.R. to U.S.A.

8. "Exchange Stabilization on Abstract Unit"—Substitution of the man-hour for dollar-hour. Maybe. Anything is better than a speculative commodity for measuring human values—but still you have an expedient instead of a principle though a far better expedient. Can't you think of something easier to arrive at and easier to use?

9. "Export Dominance: America to become greatest export country in all history to hold that position for thirty years' minimum"—Aren't you forgetting Russia, the great glacial among the nations? If you combined Russia and America you would certainly be right.

10. "Export Ferry"—England afloat (now from the northwest)—England still mistress of the seas. Reasonable enough. She has the experience.

11. "Governmental Evolution: the governments of the U. S., Canada and Russia . . . will become identical industrial democracies . . ."—Dead right.

12. "Fascistic Zone: that all countries of the lowland semi-tropics or tropics will evolute into some form of dictatorship to offset environmental laissez-faire."—Dead right.

13. "Socialization of Leisure"—When we have any leisure as such—we will have sense enough to keep it out of commission and not want it to be subject to draft when "load-factors" indicate efficiency requires the draft. But leisure is the reflex of employment and as such is in your picture somewhere.

14. "Research Advance: a national college of Research tactics and evolutionary

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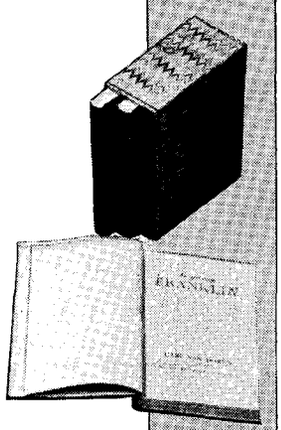

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desiderata to grow out of the U. S. Bureau of Standards. . . ."—You mean that ideas by way of which the people live, move and have their being will—within ten years—be checked upon by the Bureau to prevent exploitation of the people? They should be checked in less time than that.

15. "Patent Change"—Reduction of time limit is inevitable—but *abolition* is more in line with modern thought, isn't it Buckminster? Why should any man own ideas? They can never be his own if they are any good except to get money out of them while everything else is a case of desperate money-getting to live on and maintain some kind of ownership. But it is not right and you know it.

16. "Aviation Industry"—Aeroplanes knocking out the railroads—the poor old worms. Why mention them as extant ten years from now? Mobilization has bled them white already. Ten years from now railways will be rights-of-way belonging to the people for fluid traffic. When the plane gives up its wings and becomes a responsible mechanical unit—radio controlled—it will do all you say and some more.

17. "Labor Evolution"—The new union without so many pigeon holes, functioning without fussy internal friction, able to keep promises as a responsible social factor, etc.? God—what a blessing! A balanced society then is in sight. A dream worth dreaming—but not *that* in ten years, Buckminster.

18. "Scrap recirculation"—Waste reclaimed by government supervision and rented as an industrial reserve when desirable. Why not that way? It must be done some way, some day.

19. "Insurance Evolution"—Eventually governmental certainly but less and less important as the fear complex of an organic insecurity gives way to organic security. I like to believe we won't have to buy artificial security ten years from now because we won't need it. There is nothing more shifty in the American scene than this money-matter as a form of *security*.

20. "Name Change"—New York to "Radio City"? Unimportant if true. Who cares?

21. "Conquest of Cancer"—I don't know—unless men and maids build a physique upon a better diet, less of it, keep off worry and out of the city.

22. "No change in the way of a man with a maid or vice versa"—Well, Buckminster Fuller, if you are satisfied. . . .

Faithfully, your admirer and friend, more power to you—you valuable "unit."
—Frank Lloyd Wright, Taliesin, Spring Green, Wisconsin, August 8th, 1938.

Frank Lloyd Wright is an internationally known architect, and the author of a number of books, including "The Disappearing City," "Modern Architecture," "The Nature of Materials," "In the Cause of Architecture," and an autobiography.

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Horatio Alger, Jr.

(*Continued from page* 4)

the rich squire's son, and said to him, "That's a new bicycle, isn't it?" Conrad replied,

> "Yes; I got tired of the old one. This is a very expensive one. Wouldn't you like to own a bicycle?"
> "Yes."
> "Of course, you never will."

From that moment on, the reader could feel sure that Conrad would never say a decent word or do a decent thing; that Andy would outdistance Conrad in the boat race and Conrad would whine excuses for his defeat; that Conrad would try to burn up Andy's boat and burn his own by mistake; and that when Andy's hard work in New York at last enabled him to pay off Squire Carter's mortgage on the Grant farm, Conrad would go into a dreadful rage, as all thwarted villains do. Similarly, the good characters were always definitely noble and uttered splendid sentiments. And always virtue triumphed. Thus the reading of an Alger story was like watching a football game in which you knew the names and numbers of all the players, and the home team made all the touchdowns.

Any writer who in thirty-three years turned out well over a hundred such books and whose memory (especially as he got on in life) was often faulty, must have been expected to make mistakes. Alger made them. Frequently he got his characters mixed, to the dismay of his publishers, who had to rearrange the names. But he had a talent for improvisation. When his hero was to be taken out for a ride on the savage horse Bucephalus —which the villain hoped would run away and kill him—it would suddenly be divulged that the boy had been taking riding lessons the preceding year and had won a reputation as a rider of surpassing skill. Nothing had been said in preceding pages about this course of instruction, but Alger didn't bother to go back and insert a reference on page 45; the accomplishment was sprung upon the delighted reader, Bucephalus was mastered, and the story roared right ahead, to the triumph of the young Jehu and the downfall of the villain.

When one considers that the period in which these books were the delight of millions of American boys was that very period when the economic expansion of the United States was going on full tilt, to the accompaniment of every sort of financial knavery and speculative excess; and when one realizes that to most of these millions of young readers the Alger books provided their first intelligible picture of economic life and the making of an individual fortune, one looks again, with an analytical eye, to see how the Alger hero's fortune was achieved. And one notes, not without amusement, that the boy never got rich from the direct fruits of his industrious labor. How could he, starting in at $5 a week, even with rapid increases in pay? No; he got his hands on capital.

Sometimes this capital was inherited: the supposed orphan, ragged though he was, proved to be the son of a man whose supposedly worthless mining stock was good for $100,000. Sometimes the capital was a gift: rich Mr. Vanderpool was so impressed with the boy's pluck that he made over to him the $50,000 that the boy had helped him to save from the robbers. Or the boy was out in Tacoma, buying lots as a real-estate agent (on his boss's inside information that the Northern Pacific was to be extended to the Coast), and in a Tacoma hotel he befriended an invalid gentleman, who out of gratitude gave him a part interest in some lots that promptly soared in value and put him on Easy Street. The method varied; but when the time came for our hero to get into the money, it was a transaction in capital which won the day for him.

Yet always he was so good, and husbanded so prudently the $175 in his savings account (though he was generous, too, to the poor washerwoman and to the other bootblacks), that to the casual reader the lesson of these stories was not that hard work brings in but a pittance, or that the way to succeed is to stand in with the men who have the capital, but something quite different. The lesson was that capital comes as a reward from heaven to him who labors mightily and uses his head all the time. Work, save, be a good boy, shun the fleshpots, and presently the mining stock will fall into your lap and all will be well.

Possibly this explains something about the Gilded Age—when Americans worked furiously, and opened up the West, and accomplished wonders in invention and manufacturing; when the average American of moderate means was hard-headed, diligent, and on the whole fairly scrupulous; but when the ethical level of the big operations in capital was often well-nigh barbaric. Once capital began to fall into a man's lap, he did not inquire unduly whence it came. He had labored meritoriously; merit was always rewarded—was it not?—and now his reward was at hand; obviously it must come from heaven. One remembers Rockefeller saying, "God gave me my money," and one knows that other men of millions felt as he did. Who knows but that to some of them—and to some of their successors in more recent times—this conviction grew, in part at least, out of early lessons in economics from "Andy Grant's Pluck" or "Tom the Bootblack" —lessons learned when the man of millions had been a farm boy reading in the shade of the barn, or a grocer's clerk hiding under the counter the latest enthralling volume in the "Brave and Bold" series?

The total sale of the Alger books will

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probably never be known, for he had numerous publishers, many of the publishing firms were short-lived, and the books went through many editions—in cloth at $1 or $1.25, in paper at 40 or 25 or 10 cents. But one can get at least a clue from the fact that M. A. Donahue & Company of Chicago, who did not begin publishing them till after Alger's death, estimate their own total, very roughly, at close to ten million copies; and that Street & Smith's estimated total, likewise very roughly computed, would be above two million. The John C. Winston Co. estimate their total sales at five million. Probably it is safe to guess that the grand total must have been well beyond twenty million copies, and may have been far greater. One seldom sees an Alger book nowadays; when the Children's Aid Society questioned seven thousand boys in 1932 (on the hundredth anniversary of Alger's birth), it found that less than twenty per cent of them had ever heard of Alger, only fourteen per cent of them had ever read an Alger book, and not a single boy owned one. But during the Alger heyday, from about 1870 to about the time of the World War, the results of any such inquiry would have been far different. Parents who were people of cultivation generally frowned on the books as rubbish of a low intellectual order; some parents frowned on them as likely to tempt boys to run away from home (a charge that so distressed Alger that he inserted in many of his later volumes an explicit warning that boys in happy homes had better stay there); but other parents welcomed them as valuable incentives to thrift and ambition. And boys of all ages and conditions ate them up.

As they read, they must have dreamed of success—which included wealth, of course, and power, and the thrill of being on the way up, of being prominent, being envied—and also, presumably, a chance to marry happily, and live in a fine house, and enjoy the good things of this earth. What would they have thought, one wonders, had they been able to see, through those dreams of theirs, the man Alger himself—scribbling away in his room in the bare, dour-looking building of the Newsboys' Home in a dingy part of downtown New York; leaving his labors to play with the little newsboys and bootblacks, and perhaps to take a group of them to the circus; a man disappointed in the defeat of his real literary ambitions, disappointed in love, awkward in the society of mature men and women, and apparently almost unaware, as he went innocently and obscurely about the city, that his influence was reaching into millions of families and helping to determine the trend and tradition of American business life?

Frederick Lewis Allen is the author of "Only Yesterday" and "The Lords of Creation." Reprint rights in the foregoing article are reserved.

Hysteria in 1919

THE TRIAL OF HELEN McLEOD. By Alice Beal Parsons. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM SLOANE

THERE would seem to be no question but that Mrs. Parsons is in earnest about this novel and that its theme is important to her. She has written it at full length and with palpable care, including a sizable background and a full cast of characters. Throughout its progress there is laudable evidence of thought and an effort to understand the conflict between the forces which make for change, and those that oppose it.

The story is laid in the hypothetical Illinois town of Dalton and during the year 1919. One of those attacks of red-baiting hysteria which followed the war is sweeping over Dalton. The defenders of things-as-they-are have caused the arrest of the members of the Dalton local of the Socialist Labor Party, and among them a young, popular, socially successful matron, Helen McLeod.

Immediately, of course, the lines begin to be drawn. Most of Mrs. McLeod's friends slough her off immediately. A few rally to her support. The tempest across the Dalton teapots becomes more intense when Clarence Darrow, himself in person, enters the case as chief counsel for the defense. Mr. Darrow is obviously one of Mrs. Parsons's heroes, and she had done a good job of recreating him. His court speeches are the authentic thing, though they are largely original to her.

While Darrow is on stage, things are brisk enough, but unfortunately he is away when you need him most. The author is more interested in what a few socially prominent Dalton ladies felt about the case than anything else. A story that should have been rich and deeply stirring remains thin and curiously remote. In the effort to make her central figure a complete human being, the author rings in a curiously irrelevant romance for Helen McLeod. She does not seem to understand the workmen of Dalton nearly so well as the society matrons. In short, the elements of her story do not cohere, and this fault of structure is, unfortunately, not concealed by the writing itself. That, at least in the opinion of this reviewer, is pedestrian and often prolix.

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Reduction to the Absurd

PRIVATE VIRTUE—PUBLIC GOOD. By Henry Morton Robinson. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1938. $1.50.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

THIS book is news, for Mr. Robinson has discerned the purpose underlying the confusions and contradictions of the New Deal—to avenge Charles I and Louis XVI. "Because business was the most successful assailant of absolutist government, so business now becomes the chief object of attack from any government with absolutist aims." And make no mistake; that is the sort of government under which we groan. "The issues are joined; the struggle is upon us. The piecemeal destruction of our democratic form of government is already far advanced." No wonder the jacket of this contribution to political and moral philosophy bears blessings from Senator Vandenberg, Alfred P. Sloan, and Ernest T. Weir. One misses Tom Girdler and William Green, but maybe they were on vacation and could not be reached for comment.

Mr. Robinson's publishers say he is forty years old, but his book reads as if he were born on March 5, 1933, unless he spent the preceding three and a half years in a coma. However baneful the New Deal may be, it seems doubtful if it was spontaneously generated in a vacuum from the vindictive malice of one man, or even of the assorted groups of cranks and failures whom Mr. Robinson lists as the enemies of Business. And while Business may be, as he says, not only the fount of all the virtues but something peculiarly suited to the North American climate, one seems to recall that in the early thirties something happened to an American society which was dominated by business; it almost stopped working, and is not working very well even yet. But if private enterprise is unenterprising just now, Mr. Robinson knows why; it is because it has been "so thoroughly intimidated by hostile legislation that it fears to climb out of the storm cellar into which it dived at the beginning of the New Deal," presumably from the dizzy peak of prosperity on which the country stood on President Hoover's last day in the White House.

A good many people are trying to sock the rich nowadays, so Mr. Robinson seems to feel it is about time somebody swung on the poor. Their poverty is their own fault, due to "a notable paucity of ideas and a severe disinclination to generate extra energy." What they need is Self-Reliance, Initiative, Responsibility, and Tolerance. With his contention that private virtue promotes the public good, and that the moral regeneration of each and every one of us would do much to improve society, it is hard to quarrel. Still, if a man is equipped by Providence with the abilities of a machine tender, and the boss shuts down the factory rather than reduce the price, it is hard to see how the saintly character of the employee will help him much this side of Heaven. Hard for some of us, that is; it is clear to Mr. Robinson that "initiative and energy will always be sure guarantors of a roof and a meal." Now an absolutist administration is crushing these virtues, "coddling and spoon-feeding millions" who have "sacrificed their independence for a handout, forfeited their destiny and taken a dole." Let them go sell apples on the street corner, if that is their destiny; but they won't do it. "Crutch-building and pump-priming are impairing the independence of our people," though "all over the country jobs go a-begging."

Mr. Robinson would not be thought hard-hearted; we have five or six million "chronic unemployables" (ruined by coddling, no doubt) who must be supported, though it might be a good idea to take their votes away from them. (A really practical man would have them gassed.) But for those whose distress is caused by "their own incompetence or laziness" (and they run into millions, too) "it is time we prescribed a little old-fashioned elbow grease plus a constructive attitude toward the man who meets the payroll." Even if the New Deal was good he wouldn't like it. Suppose it succeeded in giving everybody a job, "alas! What then?" We should all be eating "the bitter bread of dependence" and doing the labor of "regimented slaves." This is proved by a picture of life under Hitler, but Mr. Robinson knows that the only difference between Roosevelt and Hitler is in their present degree of success.

All this expresses so forcibly what a good many angry people feel that it is a pity Mr. Robinson mars his argument with some weasel words. He concedes that Business, fount of all the blessings though it be, needed some punishment for its "past arrogances"; he sees a "new tyranny" in corporate management, "something hard-hearted and inhuman that frequently acts with imprudent, short-sighted severity"; he says we need a system of distribution that will get more goods to more people—though as he has proved that the poor don't deserve any more money than they have now, it is hard to see what they are going to buy with. Once he even writes as if somebody had told him what happened between 1929 and 1933; we must "plan for a new social order based upon more permanent values than two-car garages and a stock ticker in every home," we must become "the noblest people on earth." How? By regeneration, not coercion; we must "restrict the too active operation of the acquisitive virtues," but the restrictions must be spontaneous, not enforced. "These checks can be imposed from within; tolerance and self-restraint are the virtues that must be called into play by strongly acquisitive individuals."

But we can't afford to wait, tolerant and self-restrained, till the New Deal, wounded, writhes in chains, and dies among its worshipers; we must get rid of it by prompt political action, and to "contemporary politicians hard pressed for an anti-New Deal platform" Mr. Robinson offers Plato's Republic, "with proper revision." Just what revision would be proper he does not specify. He dislikes totalitarianism; yet he must be aware that Plato's Guardians strikingly resemble an ideal whose realization, as ideals are commonly realized in human affairs, is the Party that rules in Germany, in Italy, in

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Russia; and Plato's ideas on civic liberties were not very different from Stalin's or Hitler's. But perhaps Mr. Robinson is confident that when the unemployed have been disfranchised and the Guardians take charge of the destinies of America, the right men will be on top—strongly acquisitive, no doubt, but tolerant and self-restrained.

So rich men hoped and believed in Germany and Italy, before they got the government they had wanted. The danger that American rich men might be turned in the same direction by Mr. Robinson's book, to their own disaster as well as the country's, is the only reason for treating it as anything but a reduction to the absurd.

History in Quotation

ENGLAND'S YEARS OF DANGER. By Paul Frischauer. New York: Oxford University Press. 1938. $2.75.

MR. FRISCHAUER'S novel, "A Great Lord," which appeared last winter, was something more than just another variation on the Napoleonic theme. Its studied and always pertinent detail, its confident and skillful interpretation of disputed issues, showed that its author had made himself thoroughly at home in the period which he was describing. How omnivorous his reading was is now shown again in this attractive and ingenious book, which presents the complete drama of Napoleon's rise and fall in the actual words of the chief actors and the spectators.

It is a magnificent scrapbook. Its compiler wastes few words on introduction or explanation. He leaves all that to the documents themselves and to the dexterity with which he can arrange them, but he has left no possible evidence unexamined. Newspapers, parliamentary reports, military despatches, letters, memoirs, anything that was written on the spot and that carries the unmistakable stamp of freshness, are material for his scissors and paste. An obscure observer at the Russian court is quoted with as much effect as is Napoleon himself. Napoleon's public statement at some crisis is followed by Fouché's private comment. Each extract is chosen not only to further the story but also to bring to the front, if but for a moment, another and often completely divergent point of view.

The result of such a method is history in its most dramatic form, history to which the historian's comment is quite superfluous. It is all source material which, when handled as it is here with judicious brevity and telling contrast, can be the most vivid and absorbing reading. It is as breathless as a rapid novel and far more convincing because it is so compellingly genuine. There is no biography of Napoleon, no history of the First Empire, which in like space can touch this compilation for sheer excitement.

Living in a Nightmare

THE WOMAN WHO COULD NOT DIE. By Iulia de Beausobre. New York: The Viking Press. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by EUGENE LYONS

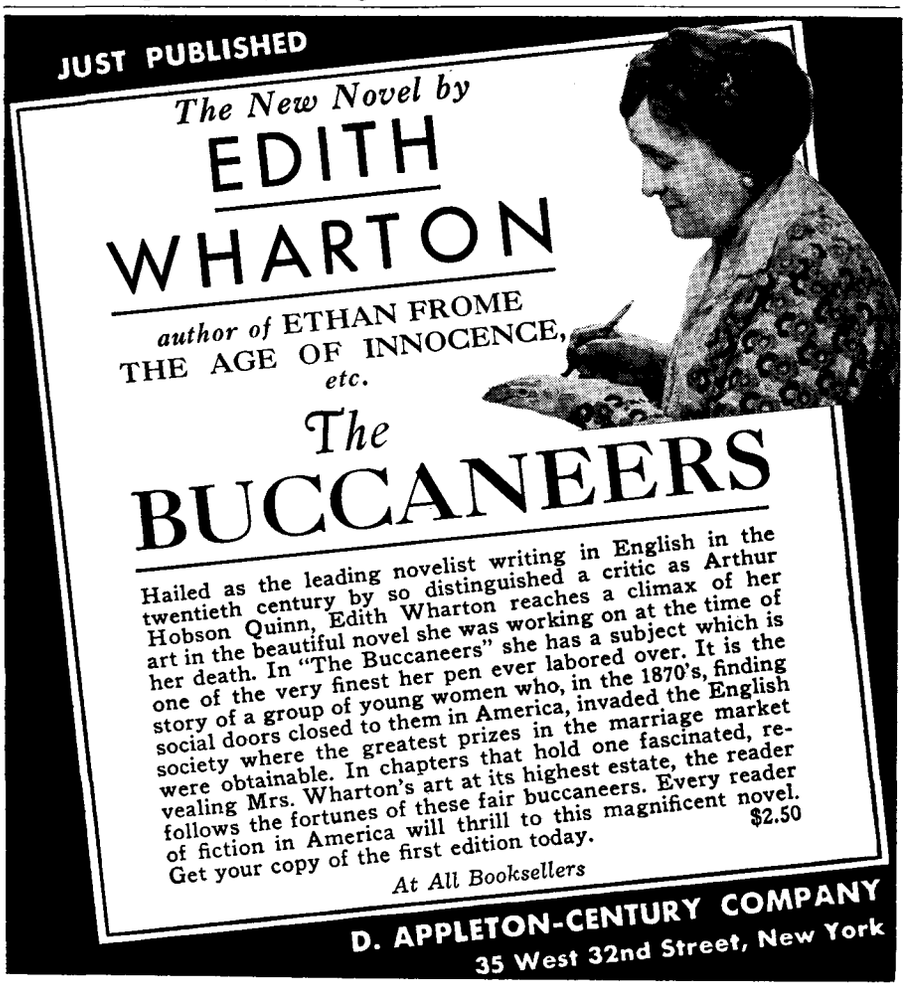
THIS is a prison memoir, an account of horrors infinitely compounded, as Mrs. Iulia de Beausobre's delicate body and sensitive mind are dragged through nine months of G.P.U. prison (three of them in solitary confinement) and eleven months of a Soviet penal camp. Yet an eery beauty hovers over the strange and passionate story, tempering and at times blotting out the horror. It is the beauty of the author's compassion, for the myriad fellow-sufferers around her, the keepers, even for her uniformed examiners. She has fashioned a delicate and utterly human document out of the rough and sadistic materials of a typical Soviet persecution of a "class enemy."

The author and her husband belonged to the class of "pre-revolutionary intellectuals," which in the early 1930's in the U.S.S.R. was almost a crime in itself. In January, 1933, Nicolay, her husband, "went out to work as usual in the morning and never came back." A week later "they" came for her, too. She was never to learn what crimes they were suspected of having committed, but few of the women "politicals" (as distinguished from the ordinary criminals) knew what suspicion or denunciation or indiscreet remark wrecked their lives.

Long months of "solitary," then the companionship of other victims, when "the cell fills with the intolerably alert silence of a number of converging agonies," in the Inner Prison of the G.P.U. headquarters in Moscow — the prison which the inmates called Palace of Torture. A few weeks in the infamous Boutirky prison, among hundreds of underworld women, bewildered peasant women, terrorized ex-aristocrats and intellectuals, herded together under inhuman conditions. Finally the sprawling forced-labor camp, where thousands live under the whip and political convicts are singled out for special persecution.

Mrs. de Beausobre fights off death and insanity, which surely overwhelm those without a desperately tenacious will to live and to retain their minds. She is sustained by the determination to find her husband some day—though she is not astonished to learn, after her own release, that he had been shot for some "imaginary offense."

It is not in the physical facts that the power of this book resides, and it does have power, but in the reflection of a remarkable woman's feelings and poetic intuitions. After her release, and months of wandering as an "illegal person," she is ransomed out of Russia by an Englishwoman, and it is in England that she writes her memoir.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Sheep-Counting vs. Phenobarbital

YOU CAN SLEEP WELL. By Edmund Jacobson, M.D. New York: Whittlesey House. 1938. $2.

SLEEP! The Secret of Greater Power and Achievement. By Ray Giles. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. 1938. $1.75.

Reviewed by MABEL S. ULRICH, M.D.

DR. OSLER used to tell his students that the number of remedies advocated for the cure of a disease was in direct proportion to the profession's ignorance concerning it. In the eyes of the medical man sleeplessness is a symptom rather than a disease, but the aphorism still holds. The hundreds of sleep-wooing panaceas and tricks that have come down to us through the ages attest far more to wishful thinking than to scientific knowledge. Today the barbitals have supplanted sheep-counting in popular favor. Dr. Jacobson quotes from *Fortune* the astounding statement that "in 1932 enough phenobarbital alone was sold to provide most of the population of the United States with a night's rest."

The story of sleep is a fascinating one, partly because after years of research it still remains a mystery story. Both of these books tell it in a lively fashion that makes easy and entertaining reading. Both tell of the physicists, chemists, and doctors who have worked with see-saws, chemical salts, electric nodes, etc., with human and other guinea-pigs, and of the succession of theories they propounded—theories that further researches have tossed into the limbo dreaded by all scientific investigators. Yet the mystery of sleep is still unsolved.

Nevertheless progress has been made. Not so very long ago it was pretty generally agreed that the purpose of sleep was to permit the soul to leave the body and go on expeditions of its own. Today the evidence seems to point to a "sleep center" hidden in the nervous system. True, nobody as yet has identified such a center, but several workers think they know where it is.

Dr. Jacobson has spent pretty nearly all his time for the past thirty years on the sleep problem. He was still at Harvard when he became convinced that there was the closest connection between muscle tension and sleeplessness. He is now director of a Chicago laboratory, of which he gives an interesting account in the latter part of his book. Four years ago his "You Must Relax" was seized upon with fervor by a tense country. His interest in the relation of relaxation to the recuperative powers of the body has led to the development of electrical recording apparatus so delicate that it can detect the faintest "residual tension" in muscles apparently fully relaxed. It is to this "residual tension" that Jacobson ascribes much insomnia, and he seems to understand just how you can be trained to eliminate it. He presents his thesis through conversations between a "normal" but "nervous" automobile salesman and a wise but folksy doctor, both of whom become very real as the book progresses. The author makes no extravagant claims, and repeatedly warns that time and persistence are essential for a cure. So if you are not "that kind of a person" you will have more fun with Ray Giles's "Sleep!"

Mr. Giles has had much experience writing for magazines, and he knows all the tricks for presenting his "message" in the breeziest possible form. He knows also the lure of names. And so, sprinkled liberally among his "scientific facts" and good horse-sense are "101 Tips from Famous People." These include persons as divergent as Rube Goldberg and Jascha Heifetz, Lillian Gish and Dorothy Thompson. Apparently no one was too busy or important to forego sharing his sleeping tricks with his tossing compatriots. It is all very gay and racy, and the line-drawings contributed by the author are in complete harmony with the text.

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Fiddler in Italy

THE WAVELESS PLAIN, An Italian Autobiography. By Walter Starkie. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1938. $3.50.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

IN these recollections of his Calabrian and Sicilian meanderings, readers of Dr. Starkie's earlier books will recognize the scholar gypsy who fiddled his way through Spain and Hungary and Roumania. He is a lively and learned traveling companion, whose interest in the more picturesque specimens of contemporary humanity is matched by his interest in things past and his knowledge of them. He is equally at home in a beggars' den and in the civilization that he conjures up while contemplating the Greek temples of Girgenti. The vagabond fiddler is also a Fellow of Trinity, Dublin. As a Calabrian guide he is less avid of curious bookish lore than is Norman Douglas, and he is less given to philosophizing. A visit to Croton evokes no acid dissertation on Pythagoras, Plato, and Christianity; and a climb to Rossano results in no chapter on Byzantism. But Dr. Starkie has his own stock of out-of-the-way learning, he can philosophize on occasion, and "The Waveless Plain" is, after all, essentially autobiography.

It is the record of the author's experiences in Italy, and his thoughts about Italy, during the past twenty years; and it is only natural that a large portion of the volume should be devoted to the Italy of Il Duce, for the March on Rome is now sixteen years behind us. In Dr. Starkie's eyes, Mussolini is the regenerator and savior of his country, a national leader who has effected a spiritual as well as a material renaissance. Synthesis of Cæsar and Napoleon, he is the realization of the Nietzschean dream. He is "a phenomenon of nature. He has been cast up and out of the soil of Italy as a reminder of the eternal primitive virtues of the Italic race which perpetuate themselves from age to age, as flowers and plants do in the Spring."

Let no victim of what Dr. Starkie calls ceaseless and misleading propaganda hastily conclude that this scholar-fiddler has formed his judgments of Il Duce at long range and therefore been himself misled. On the contrary. Since the inception of Fascism he has been married into an Italian family that has flourished and served under the new regime. Not only has he stood, on many occasions, within sound of Mussolini's public voice, but he has sat with him at the little table in the big room in the Palazzo Chigi and noted that his countenance, seen closely, is "lively and winning." More than that, he has accompanied Il Duce's happy singing troops to the Abyssinian war, and at the front itself has observed the heroism with which the devoted Blackshirts faced their terrible foes. "The courage of the Abyssinian fighters," he testifies, "was remarkable; they rushed *en masse* upon the machine guns."

So it is plain that whatever one may think of Dr. Starkie's conclusions regarding the New Italy and its leader, one cannot accuse him of having arrived at them lightly.

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The New Books

Fiction

WHAT'S A HEAVEN FOR? By Percy Marks. Stokes. 1938. $2.50.

Mr. Marks, who has already made a niche for himself as a novelist of college life, now takes his boys and girls through the graduation gates (at the University of California) and out into the big world, where he keeps a careful eye on them until they have become married and firmly established in their respective careers. Both Russell Steele and Nathaniel Wayne have been deeply influenced since their high-school days by Browning's dictum that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" Russ, with the grasp of a good small-time lawyer, reaches out for a national reputation and, in the end, is forced to retire to a country practice when his health breaks down from over-reaching. Nat, who figures as the chief character of the novel, reaches for distinction in the business life of San Francisco, pursuing the ambition which his farmer-father holds for him. Accustomed to the tangible economics of farm-life, he finds the world of banking and credit-finance unreal, and his efforts to rise above the position of bank-teller seem like the efforts of a swimmer in a vacuum. Finally, forced by circumstances to recognize that his is, properly, the grasp of a farmer, he gives up the futile struggle and returns to his ancestral farm, where at last he finds the secure and abundant life for which he had fought. The moral is that a man's reach should at least be proportioned to his grasp, or what's an earth for?

"What's a Heaven For?" is a problem novel, dealing with a very real problem that confronts a large proportion of present-day college graduates. Like many problem novels, the emphasis is on the economic and social circumstances in which Mr. Average Man finds himself, and since the characters must be drawn to represent Mr. A. M. in certain typical positions, they can have no memorable qualities as individual creations of fiction. Many readers will recognize Nat's plight for their own. Most of them, lacking ancestral farms, will have to content themselves with what vicarious comfort they can get from Nat's good fortune.

L. J. H., JR.

THE HILL GROWS STEEPER. By Fannie Cook. Putnam. 1938. $2.50.

The Career-Woman and her home-life and will the twain ever meet has long been a favorite subject with our women writers—who are, of course, career-women themselves, and so well qualified to speak. Mrs. Cook is even more so than most, because in addition to being a writer (this is her first novel), a wife, and a mother, she has, like her heroine, had an active career in the woman's end of St. Louis's politics. It's fairly obvious, then, that the parts of this book which deal with Harriet Andrews at work are based on fact, and they are certainly its most convincing sections—rather like clear-headed enthusiastic articles. Unfortunately, Harriet's private life is not so well done, and, unfortunately too, from her little-girlhood in a small town, when she first rebels against the inferior position of her sex, through to the conclusion of the book when she gives up a very superior career because she finds it incompatible with being a first-rate wife and mother, she is a smug and competent rather than a sympathetic character. Some of this may be owing to Mrs. Cook's stilted style and to the rather inept construction of the novel. This is too bad, because whether one agrees with the author or not, her material is interesting and in more skillful hands might have made a good book.

L. A.

A HUSBAND FOR KUTANI. By Frank Owen. Furman. 1938. $1.50.

These four short tales admirably perform their main function—that of entertainment. With their help, the reader can while away an hour or two in a pleasingly imaginative Chinese world. He must not look for realistic portrayal of Chinese life or character. He must not object, either, to one more addition to that long shelf of exotic works based on an Orient that exists only in fevered Western minds. Having leaped these hurdles, he will be pleasantly entertained. He may then enjoy the love story of Kutani, the child born—save the mark!—of a Chinese mandarin's second wife and her Japanese lover. He may also join Dr. Shen Fu's search for the elixir of life, with its accompanying surprises; observe the last of the Confucianists defending

(*Continued on next page*)

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
THE LISTENING HOUSE *Mabel Seeley* (Crime Club: $2.)	New boarder in sinister old house (American) with beldame mistress gets mixed up in a double murder which police finally unravel.	Blood-curdling affair, drenched with old evil and grisly incidents. Sleuthing able, but it's the background and people that make it hum.	Especially good
THE TWISTED FACE *Frederic Arnold Kummer* (Dodd, Mead: $2.)	Girl inheriting eerie Eastern Sho' mansion finds death almost on doorstep. Elderly Judge Tyson leads cops to killer.	Quest of treasure trove that caused three deaths has many thrilling convolutions, romantic trimmings, and embattled ending.	Good
POISON PARTY *Margaretta Brucker* (Phoenix: $2.)	First murderee collapses into her birthday cake. Others follow, in kitchen and on diving float. Crate Steele solves it.	Tangled marital and emotional affairs of various midwest characters gives tale certain zest—with an old friend turning up at end.	Undistinguished
CRAINE'S FIRST CASE *E. P. Healy* (Holt: $2.)	Dress model garroted. Unquenchable amateur Craine gives Detective Rochelau of N. Y. homicide squad trouble but helps in end.	Flighty cackle of Craine and his sweetheart may annoy some, but plot unravels swiftly—to not altogether faultless finish.	Average

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The New Books

(*Continued from preceding page*)

their beliefs in a hidden mountain settlement through the wiles of a beautiful woman; or watch the charms of a Chinese courtesan fade as her lovers withdraw the affection which had beautified her. A poetic imagery throws a soft light over the narratives, adding much to their fascination and obscuring their inherent improbabilities.

T. A. B.

Travel

200,000 FEET. The Edge of the World. By Michael Powell. Dutton. 1938. $3.50.

This unusual travelogue recounts lightly the very serious business of making a motion picture under the most difficult conditions imaginable. Mr. Powell, now an assistant to Alexander Korda, had seven years' hard luck with his dream of producing a film record of the depopulation of the Scottish islands, a tragic exodus caused by the failure of the crops, peat, wool, and the decimation of the fish by foreign trawlers. His heart was set on St. Kilda of the Hebrides, an island so savage that its sheep bit dogs, but when the "pawky wee body" who managed it refused to allow the filming, he chose Foula in the Shetlands to illustrate his theme. "The wind is the outstanding feature of the climate" there, according to the North Sea Pilot, but atop the 1200-foot cliffs of that stormy speck of an island he found a hospitable folk who not only acted for his film, helped him remove the roof from their church, and in every way abetted the disruptures of their peaceful community, but wished to return their pay to him when the job was finally done. It must indeed have been a "spiritual experience" for the cinema sophisticates—twenty-four young men and two actresses—who were marooned, first voluntarily and later by storm, for a good film's sake.

There was very little friction among them, despite the newspapers that sought to capitalize the situation; their nightly parliaments settled differences; at seven degrees south of the Arctic circle they worked off steam in water battles, and tried concertedly to make the film a beautiful thing. They were buffeted by Bonxie birds, they challenged ghosts, they had appendicitis and broken bones among them. But they each had, too, an acquaintance with as rare a group of men as you are likely to meet in print. The book is filled with a true humor that tides you over the most prosaic episodes.

H. D.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 233)

NATHANIEL WARD: "SIMPLE COBBLER."

To speak moderately, I truly confess it is beyond the ken of my understanding to conceive how those women should have any true grace, or valuable virtue, that have so little wit as to disfigure themselves with such exotic garbs.

PERSONALS

ADVERTISEMENTS will be accepted in this column for things wanted or unwanted; personal services to let or required; literary or publishing offers not easily classified elsewhere; miscellaneous items appealing to a select and intelligent clientèle; exchange and barter of literary property or literary services; jobs wanted, houses or camps for rent, tutoring, travelling companions, ideas for sale; communications of a decorous nature, expressions of opinion (limited to fifty lines). All advertisements must be consonant with the purposes and character of The Saturday Review. Rates: 7 cents per word, including signature. Count two additional words for Box and Number. Payment in full must be received ten days in advance of publication. Address Personal Dept., Saturday Review, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.

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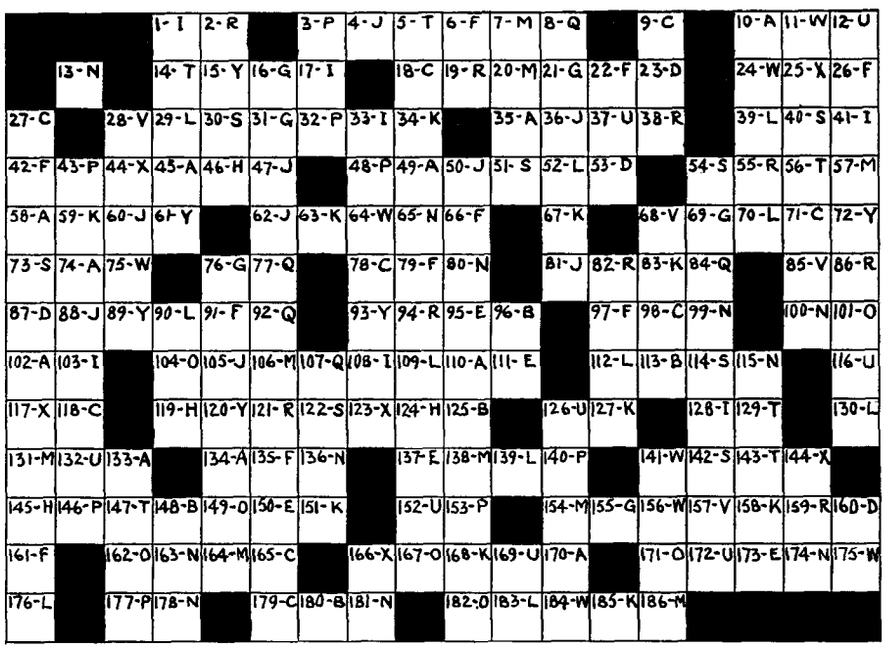
Double-Crostics: No. 234

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY



DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double-Crostic* will be found on page 22 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. Laid with checker work.
B. English composer (1857-1934).
C. Calvinistic Methodists of 1740 period (2 wds.).
D. Hub of a wheel.
E. Wailing cries.
F. Any cudgel (Irish).
G. English satirical poet (1653-1683).
H. Produces as clear profit.
I. Agreeableness.
J. Bothering; quivering.
K. English novelist (1689-1761).
L. With adequate force.
M. Heedful.
N. Buffoon; zany (comp.).
O. Resisted.
P. Thirteenth President of the United States.
Q. Unreliable; improbable (colloq.)
R. Abrasion; friction.
S. Holds back.
T. Grown coarsely.
U. Office of English Lord Chancellor.
V. Excess of chances.
W. Novel by Mrs. Humphry Ward.
X. Hebrew prophet.
Y. Zero.

WORDS

134 133 102 10 74 45 110 49 35 170 58
180 96 125 113 148
98 118 18 27 9 71 179 78 165
23 160 87 53
111 173 150 95 137
42 79 22 161 26 66 91 97 6 135
76 31 16 21 69 155
124 46 119 145
1 128 33 108 41 103 17
47 88 62 36 4 50 105 60 81
158 59 185 63 67 34 83 151 168 127
109 130 112 90 39 29 70 139 52 183 176
131 7 20 164 57 138 154 106 186
100 80 181 65 163 13 178 99 115 136 174
149 182 167 101 171 162 104
153 177 3 32 48 146 140 43
77 107 84 8 92
94 2 55 121 19 159 86 82 38
30 122 40 142 51 114 73 54
147 56 5 143 14 129
12 152 126 172 116 37 132 169
157 85 68 28
156 11 75 24 64 175 141 184
144 44 123 166 117 25
89 15 120 61 72 93

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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

A. F., at the Hollywood Bookstore, 6760 Hollywood Boulevard, replies invitingly to Old Q's lament that he'll miss the slippered heels on the streets when the season changes. "Come out to Hollywood," she exclaims persuasively, "the silk heels will flop all winter." ☞As a matter of fact we are looking forward to many a good laugh in the new styles. A baby stovepipe or a wicker creel perched on the upsweep hair-do is our best hope that maybe the world still has too much humor to go to war. ☞The runaway success of Peg Halsey's *With Malice Toward Some* is perhaps due to the fact that it's the first time the English have been adequately kidded (by an American) since Ben Franklin. ☞Of course the Scots do it all the time; and a Czech, Karel Capek, did it beautifully some years ago. ☞A delightful visitor was Ralph Sargent of Knox College, who has such a fine Leica that we took him out to Suffolk County, L. I., to see our Family Tree, Quercus Giganticus, probably the biggest vegetable in New York State. If the picture comes out well we shall print it. ☞Meanwhile we gather from the photo of Beatrice Lillie and J. B. Priestley reproduced herewith that a softball version of cricket has been introduced in England. Miss Lillie and Mr. Priestley were captains of the two teams, actresses and authors, in a recent benefit match.

☞Richard Hughes's remarkable hurricane story, *In Hazard*, has an even higher wind than *High Wind in Jamaica*. It goes right off the Beaufort Scale and reaches 200 m.p.h. We wish some meteorologist would tell us what is the highest wind velocity ever recorded. ☞Or probably we can look it up in Lecky's *Wrinkles* or Felix Riesenberg's *Standard Seamanship*. ☞Of all forthcoming books the one that is Seeded First in our own private anticipation is Pearsall Smith's autobiography. ☞Speaking of sea stories, Charley Force tells us that the manuscript of H. M. Tomlinson's *The Sea and the Jungle* was written by hand in five composition books and is locked in the strongroom of a bank in Croydon, England. ☞We are happy to say we spoke too soon about the old squarerigger *Tusitala* being broken up. According to the Providence *Journal* she was saved at the last minute: the U. S. Maritime Commission bought her back from the shipbreakers in Fall River on the eve of her intended destruction. She will be commissioned as a training ship for the merchant marine.

London News Agency Photos
Cricket match: actresses vs. authors

☞Appleton-Century Book Chat remarks that this is going to be a good season: in the last week of August they put back to press no less than 123 of their older books, titles known as "staple stock." ☞We ourself had come to the same conclusion by noticing how many publishers were having lunch at the Ritz (when we walked through there hastily the other day en route to Horn and Hardart's). ☞Speaking of MSS we should like to own, we noticed that the Scribner Book Store not long ago listed the original 36 holograph pages of *The Monkey's Paw* by W. W. Jacobs for $1100. ☞Exciting to any collector of sleuthiana should be the collection of letters to and from Vidocq and certain dossiers of crime material offered by Scribner at the minuscule price of $37.50. ☞Dodd Mead offer the Red Badge $1000 prize for the best mystery novel (by an author not previously published under their imprint) submitted before Dec. 1, 1938. Further details on application to D. M. and Co. ☞We always enjoy *The Blue Pencil* when it comes our way, a "bi-monthly bulletin for writers not yet rich or famous." It is edited by Tom Uzzell, a helpful and vigorous critic of expectant talent, at 342 Madison Ave., N. Y.

☞The Library of Congress has sent around an interesting booklet describing its beautiful new Annex. 100 years ago the resources of the L. of C. were contained in "Six hair trunks and a map case." We like the description of the pneumatic carrier system that transports books from the Main Building to the Annex. "The oval leather pouches have a capacity of eight average-size octavo volumes. They travel at a speed of 25 feet a second but their arrival is cushioned by a bank of air which prevents damage to their contents." ☞Many an author has wished that the arrival of his book had been cushioned by something. ☞We were pleased to see the Columbia University Press quoting from a good book they published eleven years ago—*The Realm of Literature* by Henry W. Wells—and saying they still hope to sell some copies. That's the spirit. ☞Alfred V. A. Van Duym, well known in the Trade, has started his own Book Service (Day and Night) at 233 West 14, N. Y. C. Mr. Van Duym, whose fine work in display-planning was long a feature of the Doubleday Doran shops, offers every kind of book-help, whether advance information in specialized fields, hunt for o.p. titles, or celeritous delivery of any procurable title, domestic or foreign.

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